

EDGE

NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | HANDHELD | COIN-OP | ONLINE

Special report:
How Nintendo
fell out of love
with hardcore
gamers

Heavy Rain

*The new state of the art in
realtime 3D on PlayStation 3*

Exploring Fable II

Has Lionhead finally made
a game to match the hype?

Get into games

Expert advice on starting
a career in development

Spore science

Will Wright explains the
evolution of the god game





Videogame companies are hardly the favoured fodder of the money sections of national newspapers, but an edition of The Times this month carried in the business-focused editorial at its centre nearly an entire page focused on Nintendo's next videogame console. 'Nintendo fans rejoice', the piece began, 'there may well be a new arrival in the group's family of consoles sooner than you think'. The story was inspired by Nintendo president and CEO **Satoru Iwata** recently mentioning in an interview that his company's "hardware team started work on the next thing as soon as they were done with their previous project." This is as opposed to, of course, Iwata walking into his hardware team's office and asking them what was occupying their time, only to be told: "Well, not a lot right now, boss. That Wii design took a lot out of us. What about that control system, eh? Yeah, so we thought we'd just sit around and chill out for a few years."

When a company achieves the sort of insane success Nintendo is enjoying, this kind of thing can happen, and suddenly it's not just Internet fan sites attempting to conjure something out of nothing, it's respectable newspapers too. But the other thing that's happened in Nintendo's case, thanks to the road it has travelled in order to reach its formidable position, is an uprising among its traditional followers, who saw little in the company's recent E3 showing to suggest that Iwata and his teams haven't forsaken them. It's a topic we consider on p72, followed by a look at *Animal Crossing: City Folk*, a Wii game designed to appeal to new and old Nintendo fans alike.

You may have noticed that **Edge** is a little portlier this month. The reason will be of particular interest to readers who are as interested in making games as playing them, as we present this year's edition of Get Into Games (p123) and elsewhere consider the qualities of the Yorkshire development scene (p155). You can also read about Valve's newest recruit in this issue (p12), and be sure to take note of what David Braben has to say about the industry (p14).

And what's with the folded-up paper down there? Our first encounter with *Heavy Rain: The Origami Killer*, French developer Quantic Dream's visually and mechanically ambitious attempt at resurrecting the adventure genre on PlayStation 3. The story begins on p48.





Test drive the most
powerful lighting technology
in the industry!*

* At www.illuminate labs.com you will find all the information on how to get your own free evaluation license.

Illuminate Labs' lighting solutions, based on the proprietary LiquidLight® technology, are used in many of the most exciting game titles like Aliens (Gearbox), Killzone 2 (Guerrilla), Mass Effect (BioWare), Gran Turismo (Polyphony Digital), Heavenly Sword (Ninja Theory) and Mirror's Edge (DICE). The solutions combine state of the art global illumination with an efficient workflow to shorten production time and to reduce cost.

Illuminate Labs is a member of Epic Games' Unreal Engine 3 Integrated Partners Program.

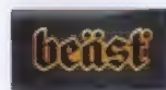


ILLUMINATE LABS®

LIGHTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GAMES



Turtle™, for Maya by Autodesk, combines advanced rendering technology with sophisticated baking functionality in one integrated toolset.



Beast™ is a content pipeline tool used for advanced global illumination and dynamic relighting of characters.

Beast has been successfully integrated with Unreal Engine, Gamebryo and several in-house game engines.



Illuminate Labs, LiquidLight, Beast and Turtle are trademarks or registered trademarks of Illuminate Labs AB, in Sweden and elsewhere. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Telephone: +44 (0)1225 442244
Fax: +44 (0)1225 732275
Email: edge@futurenet.com
Edge website: www.edge-online.com

PEOPLE ON EDGE

Tony Mott editor-in-chief
Alex Wilshire deputy editor
Ian Evenden production editor
Martin Davies writer
Richard Stanton writer
Christophe Kagan Tokyo bureau
Darren Phillips art editor
Andrew Hind deputy art editor
Colin Campbell online editor

CONTRIBUTORS

Koji Alzawa, Matthew Castle, Mike Chanell,
N'Gai Croal, Nathan Dittum, Christian Donlan,
Nick Ellis, Geraint Evans, Alexander Gambotto-Burke,
Kieron Gillen, Duncan Harris, Leon Hurley, David Jenkins,
Matthew Kumar, Simon Padkin, Steven Poole, Graham
Smith, Randy Smith, Terry Stokes, Mark Walbran

Ian Miller group art director
Robin Abbott creative director
Matthew Williams design director
Jim Douglas editorial director

ADVERTISING

Julian House advertising manager
Ryan Ferguson account director
Clare Dove UK sales director
Advertising phone 01225 442244

MARKETING

Tom Acton marketing campaign manager
Matt Woods brand marketing director

CIRCULATION

Russell Hughes trade marketing manager
Duncan Shearer group circulation manager
Chris Spratling circulation & trade marketing director
John Lawton international account manager
(john.lawton@futurenet.com)

PRINT & PRODUCTION

Kirsty Bell deputy production manager
Rose Griffiths production manager
Richard Mason head of production
Colin Polls Future Plus buyer

LICENSING

Tim Hudson head of international licensing

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED

James Birms publishing director
Simon Wear chief operating officer
Robert Price chief executive

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Phone our UK hotline on 0844 848 2852
Subscribe online at www.myfavouritegames.com

Printed in the UK by Benham Goodhead Print, Bicester.
Covers printed by Midway Colour Print, Holt, Wilt.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd
2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT.
(0207 429 4004)

Edge is the registered trademark of Future Publishing Limited. All rights reserved.

"Sometimes you just gotta go for it."

Want to work for Future?

Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs

A member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations
30,164
January-June 2008

Future Publishing Ltd is part of Future plc.
Future produces carefully targeted specialist
interest magazines, websites and events for
people who share a passion. We publish
more than 170 magazines and websites
and 100 international editions of our titles
are published across the world.

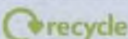
Future plc is a public company quoted on the London
Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR). www.futureplc.com

Roger Parry non-executive chairman
Stevie Spring chief executive
John Bowman group finance director

© Future Publishing Limited 2008. All rights reserved. No part of this
magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of
the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 3058088) is
registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing
Limited is at Redwood Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. All
information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far
as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept
any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are
advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the
price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit
unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to
publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine,
including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format
throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and,
although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or
subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

PRODUCTION OF EDGE

Hardware: Power Macintosh G5
Software: Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop,
Adobe Illustrator and Microsoft Office
Typography: Adobe's Jazzer Light, Regular, Bold, Black, Italic, Mix
(11-14) Light, Regular, Semi-Bold, Bold, Black, Italic; Simon Thompson/Text
Designs; Chompinet; Gernie; Olive Book; Medium, Bold, Italic;
Premiere Book, Bold, Italic; Bad Excuse, Bad Excuse Bold



When you have finished with
this magazine please recycle it



ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS 48

Quantic Dream reveals the visually incredible PS3 title
Heavy Rain, aiming to give new life to the adventure genre



BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS' SAKE 56

Fable II makes it much harder to be good. But will that
make it more difficult for Lionhead to make a good game?



NINTENDON'T 72

What has Nintendo done to fall foul of its followers? Plus:
an interview with the man behind the new *Animal Crossing*



MANUAL LABOUR 82

You may never have looked at one, or you may have read
them for hours; we browse the world of the game manual



CONTENTS

OCTOBER

This month



CREATURE COMFORTS 64

Will Wright shows us that the real imagination in *Spore*
doesn't come from making suspiciously shaped lifeforms

Every month

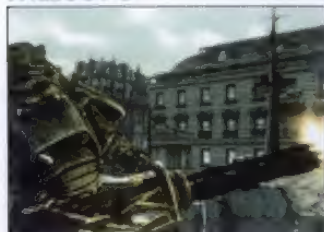
- 8 Start
News, interviews and more
- 26 Industry Focus
The rise and rise of the browser MMO
- 28 Something About Japan
Koji Alzawa offers another view of E3
- 104 Time Extend
A stroll through the garden in *Pikmin*
- 109 The Making Of...
Eugene Jarvis' anti-drugs shooter *NARC*
- 112 Codeshop
How Sony is supporting its vast dev network
- 115 Edge Moves
The best new videogame industry jobs
- 184 Playing In The Dark
N'Gai Croal seeks motivation
- 186 Trigger Happy
Steven Poole goes to war
- 188 Hi, I'm Randy
Randy Smith prepares to draw
- 190 Inbox
Your letters, and a farewell to *Crashlander*

CONTENTS

CONTINUED

Hype

FALLOUT 3



360, PC, PS3 32

RACE PRO



360 34

RESIDENT EVIL 5



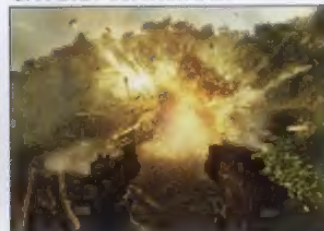
360, PS3 36

C&C: RED ALERT 3



360, PC 37

CRYSIS: WARHEAD



PC 38

THE LAST GUY



PS3 39

CAPTAIN RAINBOW



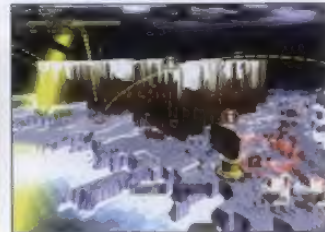
Wii 39

THE GODFATHER 2



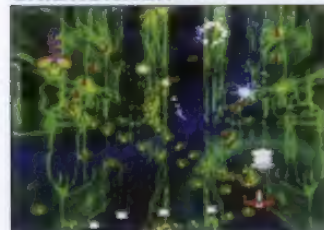
360, PC, PS3 40

MULTIWINIA



PC 42

GRIDRUNNER+++



360 42

MOTORSTORM: PACIFIC RIFT



PS3 43

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD



360, DS, PC, PS2, PS3, Wii 44

PURE



360, PC, PS3 44

MUSHROOM MEN



Wii 45

TORNADO



DS 45

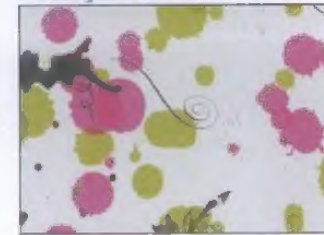
Review

STREET FIGHTER IV



Coin-op 90

PIXELJUNK EDEN



PS3 98

SPACE SIEGE



PC 100

METAL SLUG 7



DS 102





START



FACEBREAKER



360, PS3, Wii 95

TOO HUMAN



360 92

STALKER: CLEAR SKY



PC 94

VIVA PIÑATA: POCKET PARADISE



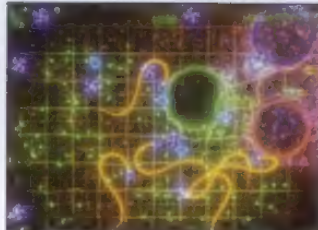
DS 96

WARIO LAND: THE SHAKE DIMENSION



Wii 97

GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED 2



360 99

DRAGON QUEST IV



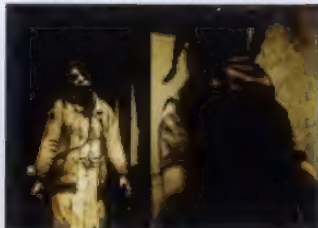
DS 100

STRONG BAD'S GAME EP 1



PC, Wii 101

SIREN: BLOOD CURSE EPS 4-12



PS3 101

RATCHET & CLANK: QUEST FOR BOOTY



PS3 102

RHYTHM TENGOKU GOLD



DS 103

CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION



DS 103



8

Sony side up

We talk to SCEE chief Kazuo Hirai about the company's rise in fortunes



10

Fantasy quest

How Square Enix's Final Fantasy showcase captured JRPG otaku

12

Breaking into Valve

The story of how one modder landed a job with Gabe Newell and company

14

Where now for Britsoft?

A new campaign aims to boost game development in the UK

16

Enemy behaviour

The man behind Halo's AI on giving life to a firstperson shooter

18

How to make a blockbuster

We talk to Naughty Dog about the creation of Drake's Fortune

20

Calling the shots

EA's Peter Moore tells us how he handles the American sports scene

22

Awards season

Halo 3's Edinburgh win, and details on Edge's new Golden Joystick

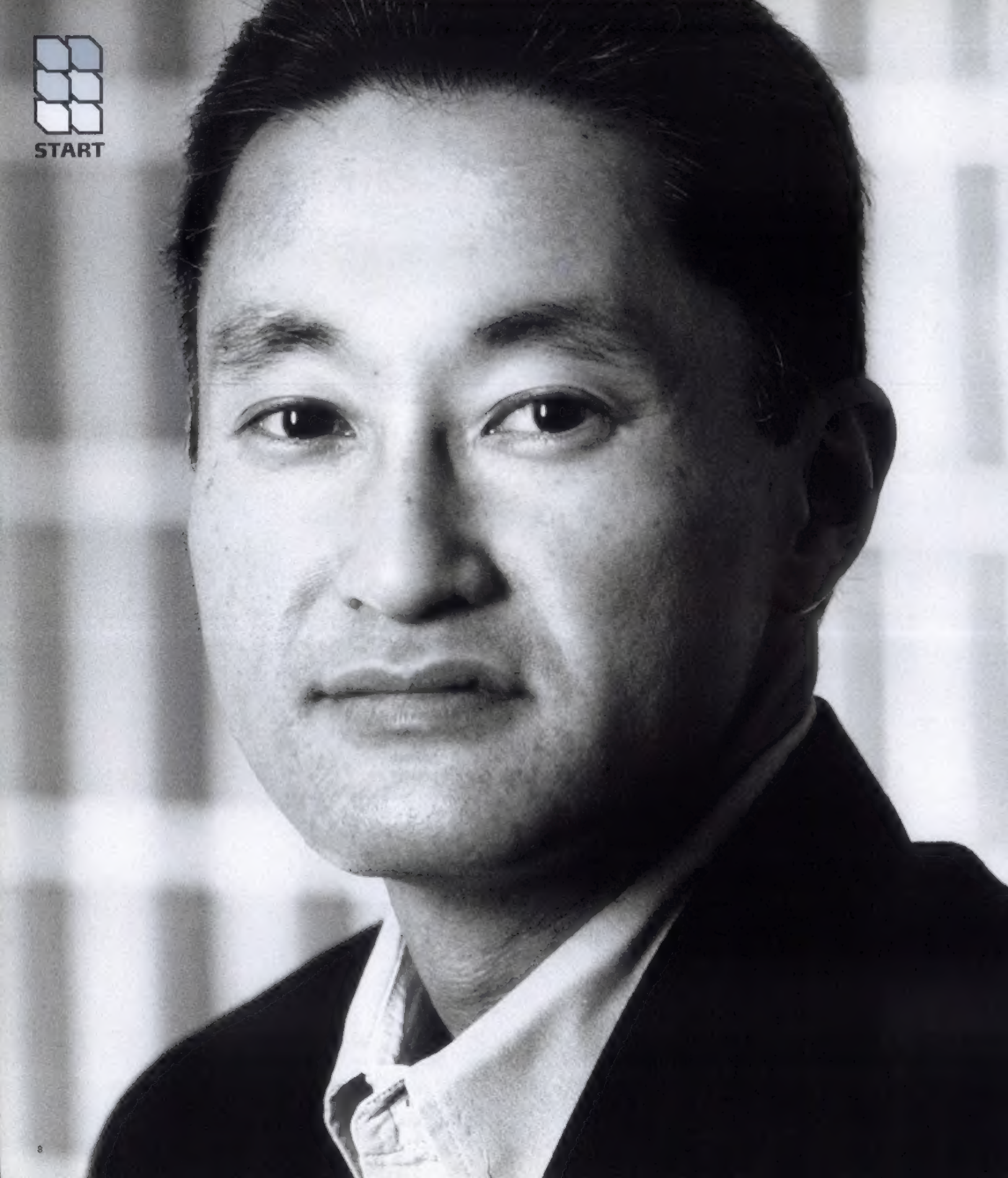
24

Incoming

Including Rage, Battle Fantasia, Skate 2 and MK Vs DC Universe



START



INTERVIEW

Station master

The head of Sony's gaming division tells us why PlayStation is keeping him very busy

PlayStation 2 is still selling, PlayStation Portable is going from strength to strength, and PlayStation 3 has turned a corner, so the mood at Sony Computer Entertainment must be positive, especially following a period in which it faced successive PR headaches. We met with **Kazuo Hirai**, chairman and group CEO of the division, to catch up on the story to date.

How are you? How's life at Sony right now?

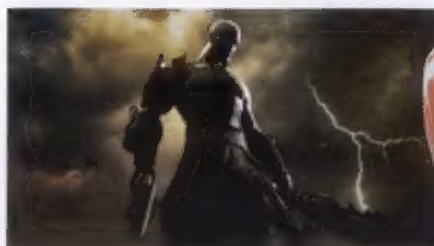
Very good, I'm feeling very good. We've got a lot of PS3 titles out, like *GTS Prologue* and *MGS4*, and you've seen [at E3] what we have lined up from just our firstparty side for this holiday. The PS2 continues to just rock: nine years in and 130 million units later we're still in business. The PSP – what a resurgence; after we brought in the Slim and Lite version last year we just can't keep it in stock. We are firing on all eight cylinders – or all three platforms, if you prefer. We're feeling good.

On a negative topic, what was your personal reaction to what happened with PlayStation 3 firmware update 2.40?

My personal reaction is that shouldn't have happened. I made sure that my feelings were felt. We were able to identify the issue very quickly; we pulled it as quickly as we could, and for those consumers whose consoles froze on the XMB we are dealing with them on an individual basis and dealing with the firmware and getting it back to them as quickly as possible. I'd like to think that we got in front of it, but quite honestly it's something that shouldn't have happened. On the other hand we do a lot of these and this kind of thing is very rare, and that's because of the extensive testing we do before any of these firmware upgrades do go out.

Looking at the PS3 story so far, if there was anything you could go back and do differently, what would it be?

Well, I was not in place to decide on some of the issues for the worldwide launch, but while we were very confident – and still are – of the PS3's capabilities, we may have been a little too zealous in



Sony is banking on upcoming games such as *God Of War III* (top) and *Resistance 2* (above) to maintain some of the momentum PS3 has now achieved. A revamped PSP, meanwhile, is also on the cards. Sales of the existing iterations have reached nearly 14m units worldwide

trying to get that message out too quickly. In other words, we can talk about all the non-game functions, features and services now because we actually have them. To say that it isn't just a games machine without being able to point to tangible things that you can show to consumers – that's a bit of a challenge. So in the US operation, which I was running at that point, our positioning was firstly as a great videogame console, but I think there was a bit of a disconnect between us and Japan, when they were concentrating on the PS3's

"PlayStation 3 is designed to take advantage of the non-game services and content. I want to expand beyond being just a game platform. I've seen that movie already – it's called the PS2"

other capabilities at a time when we didn't have anything to back up that claim.

We understand that a new PSP model is on its way – what's the story there?

[Turning to SCE public relations staff] Could I hear about that? [Laughs]

OK, let's say, theoretically, if Sony was putting together a new PSP, do you think it would be a good idea for it to feature a hard drive?

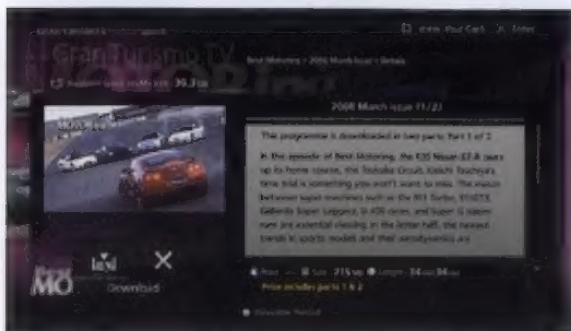
I think that whether it's a hard drive or flash memory depends on the capacity and cost involved, as well as durability – not that we want people to drop their PSPs, of course. What kind of capacity do we need, and why do we need that? That all comes into play. I don't think it necessarily needs to be a hard drive – it could be flash memory if it comes down in price. For this theoretical console, of course.

When you get back to your office, what will be the first item on your list of priorities?

I think basically it's the same thing I set out at the beginning of the year or even before that, and that is firstly making sure we stay on course and have all the great games on PS3 coming out on time and to support them as much as possible, whether they're a firstparty or thirdparty title, but at the same time making sure we are on track to develop the non-game services and content I'd like to see on the PS3 as a platform. Secondly, and more importantly, to make sure that I'm also able to lead the mindset change within the organisation to say: "Yes, games are important, they will always be important first and foremost in our mind, but there's the

other part of the business that needs to start embarking on things, and this is stuff that is not just nice to have but something that we must do on this platform." And that's not because I said so, it's because the console is designed to take advantage of the non-game services and content, and I want to make sure that we are expanding this business beyond being just a game platform... I've seen that movie already – it's called the PS2. And the high-water mark is about 130 million [sales]. And I'd like to do a bit more, and that means we need to be not only successful in games but successful in non-game areas as well. And that's a mindset change we need in the company so that we understand where we need to go with the PlayStation 3 to rally around those two important initiatives.

You're going to be quite busy, then. Absolutely. That's how I like it.



As well as its online connectivity, *Gran Turismo Sport*'s upcoming "TV" mode makes use of PlayStation 3's media-playing capabilities. The launch of PS3 in Europe was said to have boosted Blu-ray sales by 1,000 per cent – a stat that Sony certainly hasn't missed



The general ambience was surprisingly serene. Each playable demo came with headphones, immediately reducing the racket that such events usually entail. Only when videos of the games were shown on the big screens was the reverential silence broken



EVENT

Final fanservice

It's hip to be Square Enix – that's the message from the publisher's buzzing public showcase

Viral campaigns, community outreach and gamer conventions: targeted marketing is all the rage nowadays and, although on a smaller scale than BlizzCon or QuakeCon, it would be hard to find a more acutely pitched example than Square Enix's recent event in Tokyo. Cryptically titled DKΣ3713 – a portmanteau of abbreviations for six of its upcoming games – the elaborate showcase of the company's latest titles was purely for the benefit of Joe Public, who, numbering around 2,400, got in entirely free. It also turns out that Joe Public, as seen by Square Enix's marketing department, is a pretty cool guy. Taking place in the painfully hip Harajuku area of Tokyo, there was a palpable attempt to position the brands on show as being part of, or at least reflective of, the very bleeding edge of Japanese fashion. Judging by the hairstyles in the much-anticipated *Final Fantasy Versus XIII*, distressed Rockabilly puffs, slicked-back super mullets and emo hair-helmets are going to be 'in' in 2009.

Such trendspotting is something that many at the event credited to Tetsuya Nomura, Square Enix's game director and famed character designer. On hand to greet fans, and scrutinise their reactions to his games, Nomura was subject to a deluge of praise from attendees, keen to congratulate him on designing characters whose appearance and motivation seemed relevant to them. But while Nomura may well

Nomura was subject to a deluge of praise from attendees, keen to congratulate him on designing characters whose appearance and motivation seemed relevant to them

have a sharp eye for defining the moment, he's not solely responsible for Square Enix's apparent success at tapping in to it – not only is there obviously a host of other designers besides him at the company, but it has had some help in cultivating the images of its characters, signing deals with a Japanese fashion house, Roen, to put together the swish threads of *Versus'* cast. This is not the only marketing tie-in intended to make Square Enix's games feel contemporary: *Dissidia: Final Fantasy* will have its own branded 'potion' courtesy of beverage giant Suntory.



Final Fantasy: Dissidia was cautiously received by fans in its first playable appearance – though when each fighter unleashed their signature moves the excitement was palpable

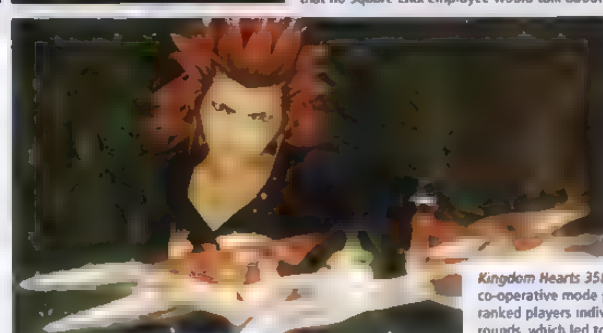


Kingdom Hearts Coded, one of Square Enix's attractive mobile RPGs. It's also one that won't be on PSP, even though its mix of on-the-move puzzles and minigames would probably suit it

Though you couldn't reasonably forget that Square Enix also makes games, the attention the company gave to its merchandising efforts did make DKΣ3713 feel as much like a fundraising rally as it did a showcase. Between the desk entrance and the main exhibition hall itself was the shop, filled with every bit of tat a Square Enix fan could dream of. Notably, the event's limited-edition T-shirts were emblazoned with legends implying participation in the development of the games themselves – all part of Square Enix's well-judged PR outreach to fans – though quite what the mass of fans contributed, other than assurances of their continuing adulation for all things *Final Fantasy*, was not entirely clear. Nonetheless, their reaction to the titles on show was itself telling. While the main focus of the event was *Final Fantasy XIII*, the recent announcement of which for Xbox 360 was seen as a dramatic coup for Microsoft, it was somewhat upstaged by the appearance of its more sober, realistically drawn dystopian cousin, *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* – a PS3 exclusive. Although little new was shown of either title, *Versus'* presentation featured an in-game sequence at the end which,



Tetsuya Nomura's touch was everywhere, and the queue for the shop was truly immense. All the fan talk, of course, was of a certain remake that no Square Enix employee would talk about.



Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days on DS had a co-operative mode playable, but the game ranked players individually at the end of rounds, which led to some stiff fan rivalries.



While suggesting nothing in the way of gameplay, it did prove that its engine is capable of producing results that are astonishingly close in quality to the prerendered footage preceding it – something only achievable on PS3 hardware, Sony might say.

A Blu-ray version of *Final Fantasy VII Advent Children* was confirmed to not only add an additional half hour of content to its already lengthy playtime but also a playable demo of *FFXIII* along with videos of *Versus* and *Final Fantasy Agito XIII* – a game previously announced for mobile but now coming to PSP. In fact, Sony's handheld had a rather good showing. *Parasite Eve: The 3rd Birthday* will also make the move from mobile to PSP, and *Kingdom Hearts Birth by Sleep* made an excellent demonstration of the machine's graphical capabilities. PSP fighting game *Dissidia* was no pair, alone either – but left many attendees slightly lukewarm. While there was nostalgic satisfaction in plucking heroes from across the back catalogue of *Final Fantasy* games, the stages were so cavernous as to interfere with the game's pace, periodically stalling battles entirely while the opponents made their way towards each other.

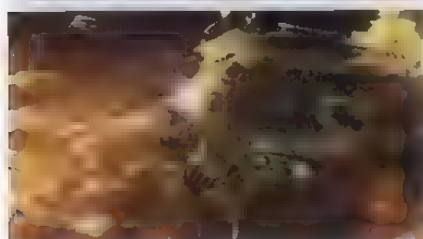
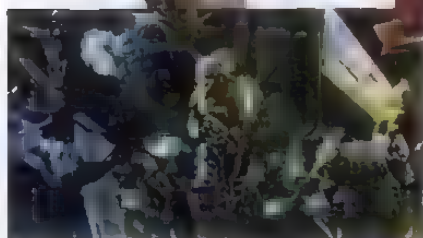
While Sony's handheld was lavished with attention, however, the DS title *Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days* struggled to attract itself. 3D Square Enix's technological competence on PSP seemed to come unstuck on the less powerful handheld, and stumbled somewhat in implementation too – just the manner of navigating through the 3D world appeared to confuse attendees. However, even the less positive reactions were tempered by the overriding sense of unconditional love for Square Enix's series. In fact, while DK23713 clearly did much to shore up existing fan support, you wonder just how useful such events are in terms of quality assessment or whether, by preaching to the choir, they end up reinforcing ideas which may not be so well received in the broader market. Nonetheless, from the slick presentation and carefully managed tone, it's clear that Square Enix knows who its fans are – and, more than that, it also knows who those fans want to be. Sharp suits and chin straps included.

Newsire



R4 the cop?

The maker of the infamous R4 card, which allows users to override their DS firmware and play illegally downloaded ROMs, has been hit by a lawsuit from Nintendo and 54 associated companies, alleging that the device is 'causing severe damage to our company and software makers, and this is something that we cannot possibly overlook'. The suit has been filed in the Tokyo District Court and is based on the Unfair Competition Prevention Law, and in all likelihood will put a stop to the production and sale of R4 cards – at least in Japan. The unfortunate knock-on effect will be on the homebrew community, which has proven itself even more resourceful than Nintendo in the use of the DS interface.



Even a few seconds of footage or new screenshots of *FFXIII* were enough to frenzy the crowd. They were particularly pretty, though.

"ATI's CTO left about six months ago and AMD's CTO left a week ago. Now, what does that say when the chief technical person at a company quits? AMD has been declining because it hasn't built a competitive graphics architecture for almost two years now – ever since the AMD/ATI merger."

Says Nvidia's chief scientist, David Kirk

"David Kirk is full of shit."

Responds Ian McNaughton, AMD's head of product and platform marketing

"Was he asleep for eight years? ... There are two types of people out there who like to make controversial, splashy comments. There are those who are truly outspoken, and there are those who are just trying to cover up for their weaknesses. We have a saying here in Japan – 'The weaker dog barks more' – and I sincerely also like to remind him to make sure to stay awake for the next years."

In between his Tecmo hearings, Tomonobu Itagaki

responds to the PlayStation 3. He says that he's not a fan of 3D action games since he made Devil May Cry.

"This is going to be one of those things that I say something in an interview and it gets fed back to him and I'm on his shithead list for a while on that, until he needs me to do something else there. But I think that that's my general opinion."

John Carmack's only one and said that Steve Jobs doesn't care about video games.

"I'm a gamer and the chance to act in one of the best-loved game franchises was an opportunity I was really keen to explore – especially as Eva is such a strong female character. The worlds of gaming and film are getting ever closer and as an actress I wanted to explore this exciting new area..."

Gemma Atkinson, who plays Eva in the new Resident Evil game, says she's a fan of the franchise.

"Penny Arcade is the worst thing in the world ever, so nein danke. These are nerds with taste!"

Graham Linehan put the kibosh on the webcomic making any sort of mark on the series of The IT Crowd.



Re-combining the Combine

Adam Foster discusses the ambitious mod that landed him a job at Valve

And so it goes, another talented member of the mod scene gets absorbed into the Valve collective. Adam Foster, above, has long been a notable member of the *Half-Life* and *Half-Life 2* mapping community, best known for his work on superb episode series *Minerva*, *Metastasis*. Remarkable for their intelligent reuse of space, Foster's levels encourage players to criss-cross and circle round an environment, avoiding the cliché of channeling them down a corridor from one box to another. We caught up with him shortly after returning from his first briefing with his new benefactors.

"I'd try to arrange things so that one section of the map could see into another – it's much more fun seeing an interesting location ahead of you"

Compact, economical level design is one of the hallmarks of your series. Just what are your frustrations with the way games have traditionally employed architecture?

Games far too frequently treat their worlds as a series of unconnected set pieces. At the end of a game play situation never referring back or forth to other parts of the same map. Corridors wind through huge expanses of so-called impassable void, there's often no meaning behind a particular corner

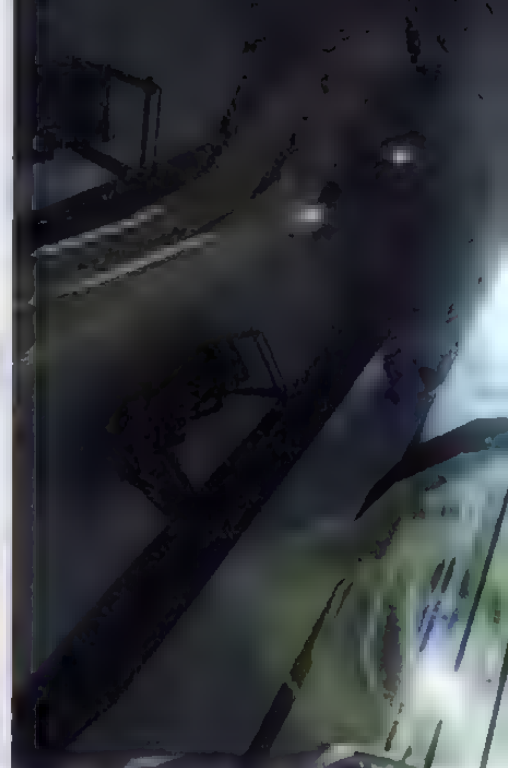
or staircase, other than the vague needs of pacing, gameplay and visibility restrictions. It becomes just a game, not a real, breathing world.

One game which recently impressed me was *Stalker: Shadow Of Chernobyl*. The designers appeared to have built vast quantities of realistic architecture, before attempting to wrap an actual game around it all – the end result being the existence of buildings with no specific purpose in game, other than being there. I loved it! Probably not a sensible way to build a game to be released any time soon, however.

As for *Minerva*, I was just one person, so, couldn't build too much on my own. Instead of connecting rooms together with dull corridors, I'd try to arrange things so that one section of the map could see into another, and thus vice versa – it's much more fun seeing an interesting location ahead of you, and knowing that sooner or later you can actually go there.

Do you feel that this has changed with later additions to the *Half-Life* series?

Half-Life 2 probably had the largest, most obvious version of the seeing-the-path-ahead trick ever, with the ever-visible Combine Citadel dominating the skyline. From almost the very beginning of the game, it was obvious where you'd end up. The *Half-Life* series has generally been pretty sensible regarding its use of architecture – there are





Having just visited Valve's offices in Seattle, Foster is somewhat excited, although very cagey, about his role. "I can't say anything – although, am I allowed to bounce around with glee?"



Photography: Charles Rowland

occasionally those sections with apparently unconnected rooms, but usually the player has that ever-necessary direction to what they're doing. You're never just farting around somewhere for no particular point, you're always going somewhere even if some of the journeys do become suspiciously full of detours and diversions.

You went over to Valve during the production of Minerva – how did the development team help you out?

In terms of advice, nothing remotely formal – got to play the in-progress *Episode One* and *Two* before they were released, and in return got to see people play through my own in-progress *Minerva* – something resembling a 'proper' Valve playtest. Which revealed all kinds of bugs and misfeatures which mostly got squashed. Ever seen someone get lost in an apparently linear map? It's possible – and was prevented from ever happening again through my forcing doors closed as players would go past.

And now the company's snapped you up. What did Valve say when it approached you?

"Do you have any interest in moving out here to Bellevue and working on our games?" That was it. Did anyone expect trumpets, fanfare and fireworks? One thing about Valve is that things are utterly, ridiculously informal. It's great.

Although Valve tends to be a bit vague when it comes to job descriptions, can you say anything about the kinds of areas you hope to contribute towards?

I gather that I'll be working on the mapping side of *Episode Three*, to start off with – and anything else. I may get co-opted in to, last week, saw our pet Ukrainian get taken by the zombies. The lab system seems to help dissolve the boundaries between particular specialisations, resulting in say

a programmer being able to have plot ideas, simply through talking to co-workers. If other people like the idea, and later on it's well-received during playtesting, then it's in – otherwise, it's out. So I'm certain I'll end up contributing to all kinds of different areas, while actually identifying said contribution will be close to impossible.

Are there things you've wanted to achieve that have been previously constrained by limited resources?

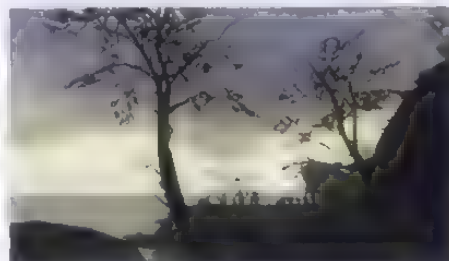
To be honest, right now I'm thinking in terms of new stuff to play with. Should I be thinking more along the lines of 'Finally I can create my masterpiece' or something? Ordering people around, telling them what to do isn't really not my idea of fun. Luckily for everyone involved, I'm precisely not what I'll be doing.

Any hint that Minerva might be embraced as part of the HL2 canon?

I have no idea! Part of the overall plot, both intentionally and accidentally, involves *Minerva* remaining separate from Valve's stuff. A certain, eventual sacrifice would make *Minerva*'s actions terribly important, but more through an absence of something monstrous happening to our world – instead of a visible battle which could be remembered and perhaps commemorated.

Either way, will Minerva continue? What can fans expect from Out Of Time? You've been quoted as saying there will be 'freakish gameplay additions'.

Wait and see. I really wish I'd be able to say more, but much of it I just don't know.



"The completed mod was much larger than I'd ever envisaged," says Foster. "The episodic route proved to be useful for providing development milestones and feedback from the general public."



Braben's games, including *The Outsider* (above) and popular WiiWare title *LostWinds* (top), have been British made since he co-wrote *Elite* with Ian Bell while a student at Cambridge University. His company, Frontier Developments, is still based in the town

Is the game up?

As a new campaign aims to revitalise Britsoft, one of its key players identifies what's wrong

The UK-born *Grand Theft Auto IV* obliterated retail records on its first day on the shelves, selling over three million copies. Other British properties, such as *Tomb Raider* and *SingStar*, have proven similarly (if not equally) successful on the world stage, capturing both core and casual demographics. Despite this, just over two years ago, the UK dropped from its position as the third largest producer of videogames in the world. In 2006, it slipped to fourth place, overtaken by Canada. And while the land of maple syrup and Jason Priestley is expected to grow its videogame industry by 25 per cent this year, the UK's will decline by three per cent.

Can anything be done to stop the slide? Not without some serious shifts in policy, perception and tax privileges, say the companies – SCE, Relentless Software, Microsoft Game Studios, Codemasters and others – that have united to form Games Up?, a campaign dedicated to rejuvenating Great Britain's games business. Games Up?



Think British games and *Tomb Raider* inevitably comes to mind. It was British developed (Core Design in Derby), British published (Eidos HQ is in Wimbledon) and had a British protagonist, the Countess of Abbingdon. The series is now made in San Francisco

champion **David Braben** (pictured above), the co-developer of *Elite* and founder of Frontier Developments (*Frontier*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon 3*, *LostWinds*, *The Outsider*), says the tax breaks given to developers in other countries are making those nations more appealing than the UK. "Many other countries are now attracting the hugely successful games industry, and Britain

"Many other countries are now attracting the games industry. The games industry in Britain is being eroded because we're now the most expensive place in the world to make games"

is being left a little bit high and dry in terms of support. The games industry in Britain is being eroded because we're now the most expensive place in the world to develop games."

Braben won't go so far as to suggest the government has been completely unresponsive to the industry; indeed, he stresses that Games Up? isn't actually asking to have the tax breaks other countries – the US, Canada, Australia – provide game developers. Rather, he explains

"We're just looking for a bit more of a leveling of the playing field. It's not an EU thing – France has favourable treatment as well. It's difficult to justify working in the UK at the moment because there are much more attractive things elsewhere."

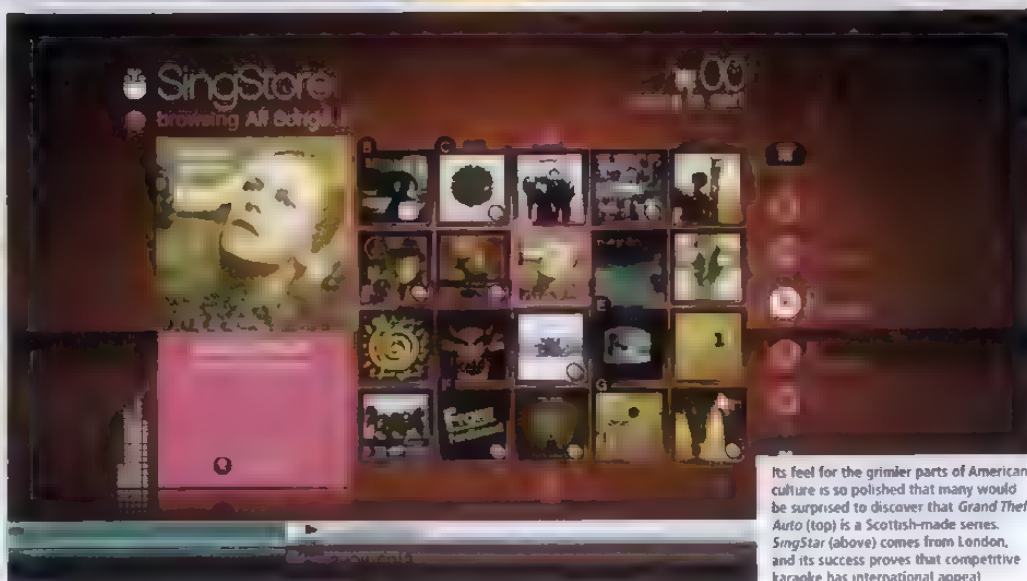
Beyond the issue of cost, there's the drastic skills shortage to consider. According to Braben, this is primarily because most students are finding the national IT curriculum

insufferably boring.

"It's a parallel thing," he says.

"We're trying very strongly to encourage government that we can be used to motivate kids and students by making subjects

where there are currently real skills shortages much more attractive. You know, games are very much 'cool', as it were, with kids, and can therefore be used as a very strong motivator. What we've had is a big fall in applications to university courses, which I think is a real tragedy. But that's because a lot of the fun has been taken out of the courses and that needs to be addressed. The rise of courses like ICT in secondary school has caused problems, because it's



Its feel for the grimmer parts of American culture is so polished that many would be surprised to discover that *Grand Theft Auto* (top) is a Scottish-made series. *SingStar* (above) comes from London, and its success proves that competitive karaoke has international appeal

just seen by kids as exceedingly dull! And so those same kids are very unlikely to go into computer science at university."

Which, he points out, doesn't just affect videogames. After all, mathematicians, physicists and computer scientists are just as likely to be snapped up by other industries – finance, for instance – as the videogame business. And our competitor for art and animation is the film industry," Braben continues. "So it's not that our skills are necessarily specific. The problem is that education's really slipping in this country."

Even those who do eventually find themselves doing game-specific courses at university could leave ill-prepared for the rigours of game development. "We've seen a real rise in computer games courses over the past five years, but most of them are basically re-purposed media studies courses," says Braben. "They're not teaching skills useful for our industry. They're teaching knowledge about games, which can be acquired just by playing them! We need a lot more maths in those courses – technical knowledge for the programming side – and so one of the things we've done with the government is create a body

called SkillsSet, which does accreditation of courses. But only four out of 16 believe BTE courses that purport to be teaching computer games are accredited, and the others are not even making moves toward accreditation."

What we're looking for is a way of getting kids to realise not all the courses are the same. At Cambridge University, for example, the number of students applying for its computer science course has dropped dramatically in the last five years, from around 500 in 2000 to fewer than 200 last year. That's where games can be used as a motivational force. You know, the same applies to maths, physics and engineering – these skills are really important for our country. We have a major motivational force and a world-class industry."

For gamers who aren't interested in one day making what they play – and remaining in the UK, there's still a very good reason to hope for Games UK's success: a healthier local videogame industry means a better climate for producing the gaming innovation for which the UK has become known. It's clear a change is needed, hopefully Games UK will make it happen.

Continue

What's better than games by a burned-out player?

The best game download service? This month it is

Helpfully gave up lots of time to play lots of *SFIV*

Quit

Stop accurately predicting future world events

Time to get rid of some high-flying friends?

They're no *International Track & Field*, are they?



EDGE MAGAZINE

ATE MY HAMSTER

Little-known fact: the name of Lionhead Studios comes from a hamster. Our recent trip to the Guildford-based developer brought this mammalian nugget from

Peter Molyneux: "I blame Edge for the death of that hamster. We only thought up the name of Lionhead because we were lost thinking about it and Mark [Healey, now of Media Molecule] had his hamster called Lionhead, and we thought, 'Fuck it, let's call it Lionhead'. That was in the morning. Then Edge visited us, and the hamster died that afternoon. It was only three years old and it keeled over. We thought it was some dreadful omen. And you thought you'd gotten away with it! Edge killed our hamster. Yeah, definitely."





Grunt work

Halo's lead AI programmer reflects on eight years of 30 seconds of fun

If the *Halo* series' singleplayer can be defined by any one element, it's its AI. The sophist cat on with which enemies and allies fought in the first game revolutionized the FPS on its release, eight years ago. Lead AI programmer **Damián Isla** has worked at Bungie since *Halo 2* development began, and was at the Develop conference to talk about how his work has changed through each title. We took a moment between sessions to talk about smoke and mirrors, natural language, and the dream of the "You're doing it wrong" button.

How much of the AI technology developed for *Halo* survived in *Halo 3*?

Very little of the code is the same, but the principles are exactly the same. Under the hood, it

"It's not hard to make only three or four marines look convincing, but when you have 15 you start to see that they aren't working as a group"

changed, mostly to deal with the increased scope. The AIs in *Halo 3* are capable of doing a lot more than in *Halo* but their basic function and the design is exactly the same.

You've said that cracks were beginning to show in the original AI design by *Halo 3*—what were they?

The fact that there were more actors in the environments makes it a lot harder to make a scene look coherent. It's not hard to make only three or four marines look convincing, but when you have 15 you start to see that they aren't working as a group. They look more like crows than a fighting



force, so we had to go back and look at the social aspects of the fights. The other issue was that the AI can do much more in *Halo* than the AI were great infantry but didn't do much more than that. Once you scale up the action, they stop seeming like thinking creatures and it's no longer clear why they're making their decisions. Clarity of decision-making is the fundamental thing for game AI. When an AI has 50 things it can do at any moment, it gets a lot muddier to understand. If a marine isn't getting in your vehicle, I had better be because there's obviously something else he wants to do. There's nothing worse than driving up and them doing something else.

Halo's actually amazingly reliable for that.

I think, like a lot of things that look easy, it really isn't. It takes a lot of work.

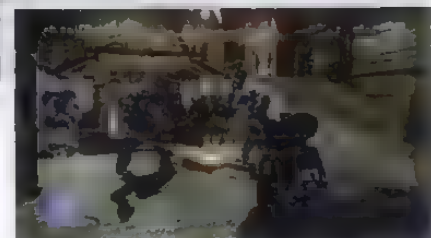
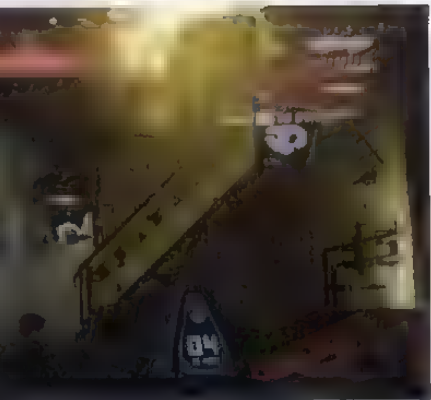
And Theater mode lays all that bare. Were you concerned when the decision was made to include it?

Actually, no, because *Halo* has always pulled less smoke and mirrors than a lot of other games. We've always been principled about the lifecycle of an AI, the fact that the guy spawns and lives his life, even if players don't usually see it. Theater mode was actually welcome because you can now watch an AI until its death, and see that the decisions it makes are clear. I really enjoy playing through a level and watching it from the Covenant point of view to see how they react.

The *Call Of Duty* series is great at creating drama and has enjoyed big sales success, but it doesn't feature AI on the level of *Halo's*—what does that mean for your work?

I think Bungie has always been an engineering-strong company, and our AI is part of that. One thing that we haven't focused on quite as much as other companies is that presentation and scripting aspect. We're super, super proud of the depth of simulation in the *Halo* world, but we realize that we need to invest as heavily in our scripting technology and other presentation. *Halo 3* does storytelling through interaction such as the battle with the Scarab, though. I don't think *Call Of Duty* has made us rethink anything in particular, but I think *COD4* is a fantastic game. They do an excellent job of scripting those moments in a way that a player can always see them. That's





something that we can always learn from because we've always had instances of players never seeing certain things at a

Has the balance of system resources you've given to AI changed over time?

We've allotted a pretty steady 15 per cent of the CPU, which translates to about five million seconds of processing power per frame

But you'd like more, right?

When it comes to AI processing almost that entire allotment comes to line-of-sight tests, whether it's testing whether my gun can see the target, or whether an AI can see the player – they're all ray casts, and they're incredibly expensive. In fact, on the 360 they've gotten more expensive – we can actually perform fewer casts than in *Halo* because the geometric complexity has shot up faster than the processing power. So it's a bit of a pain for AI in that sense. For that reason I would like more processing power or, at least, the ability to

do more ray casts. Actual decision making is very quick and cheap – it's always spatial awareness that's expensive

What's the next step for the AI technology you're working on?

That it can play more roles and interact more deeply with the player. What that means is making it more social – that is, engage in more structured interaction in the way that AI riding in the Warthog is structured. There was the well-known example in *Halo 2* where your hog full of mannes would just drive off if you got out. That's actually not that easy a problem to solve because how does the game know you intend to come back? My grand thesis is what if you can say "Wait for me." Communication with AI has been sorely neglected; you can ask them to charge, retreat, go there, but what about a higher level of communication than just orders? Even just a "You're doing it wrong" button – literally. If we had in *Halo* a lot of problems would be solved. At the moment we have to just guess the players' intentions based on very simple input – what are they looking how and for how long and where they're moving. That kind of stuff is such an impoverished representation. Imagine if you had this "You're doing it wrong" button.

Could you ever use voice?

It could definitely be used, but I'm not interested in making AI understand natural language, which is an impossible task. We'll eventually solve it in ten to 15 years, but I wouldn't support any game developer going off to try and solve that. The technology is there if you reduce your instruction set to three or four words, but natural language – certainly wouldn't touch that

Initial disappointment that the Brutes would replace Elites as the main antagonists in *Halo 3* was quickly silenced when it became clear how much their pack mentality added to larger skirmishes



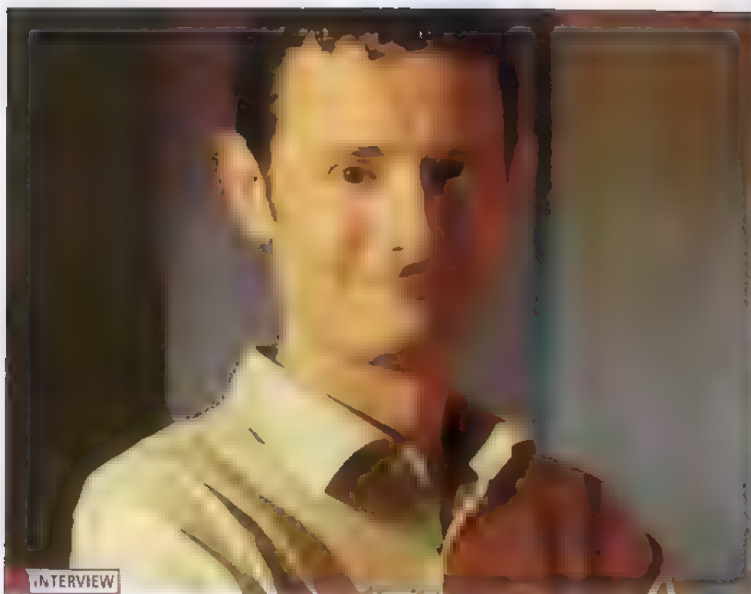
One of the most impressive aspects of *Halo*'s AI is how distinct each enemy type's adaptations to a given situation



WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

One of the administrators of Retro Remakes, Oddbob, has a home that we've somehow missed until now. It plays host to a collection of his own excellent freeware titles, including the recent *War Twat* (v1.3), as well as those of certain other contributors, and a regularly updated blog that insightfully comments on both the big and small industry issues from a perspective that's defiantly indie and opinionated. And if all the free psychotic blasting gets a bit too much there's even some soothing photography of Merseyside at one of his other linked sites, Lights Out.

Site: Mersey Remakes
URL: www.merseyremakes.co.uk/gibber



INTERVIEW

Fortune and story

Uncharted's lead designer explains how Naughty Dog creates new tricks

For an Englishman who has lived in California for 15 years, Naughty Dog's **Richard Lemarchand** has retained his accent admirably. Having been lead designer on *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, he recently spoke at the Develop conference to explain how the firm which has no dedicated managers, has developed its way of making games. The key, he said, was through dedication to pre-production, embracing change, and making sure everyone in the studio works directly on the game to some extent. Here he discusses what that meant for *Uncharted*.

"My role is a kind of director of photography. It isn't just framing the shots, it's organising the sets, making sure the lights are set up on time, and making sure the actors hit their cues"

You enjoy a great relationship with and support from Sony – do you think that any studio can take up the principles you've been talking about?

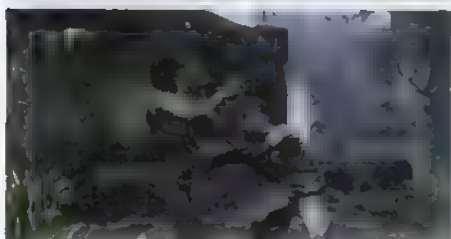
I think most studios can embrace many of the principles I talked about, but I don't think there's one set way of doing it. How we work is because of the make-up of the studio. We are very lucky that we enjoy the confidence of Sony, but we don't take it for granted. We have to refresh it by delivering the product on time and to quality.

You said that one of the problems with game development comes when a developer only sees its project as a product and not a piece of entertainment. Have you looked to the rest of the entertainment industry for inspiration? We certainly study their creative practices

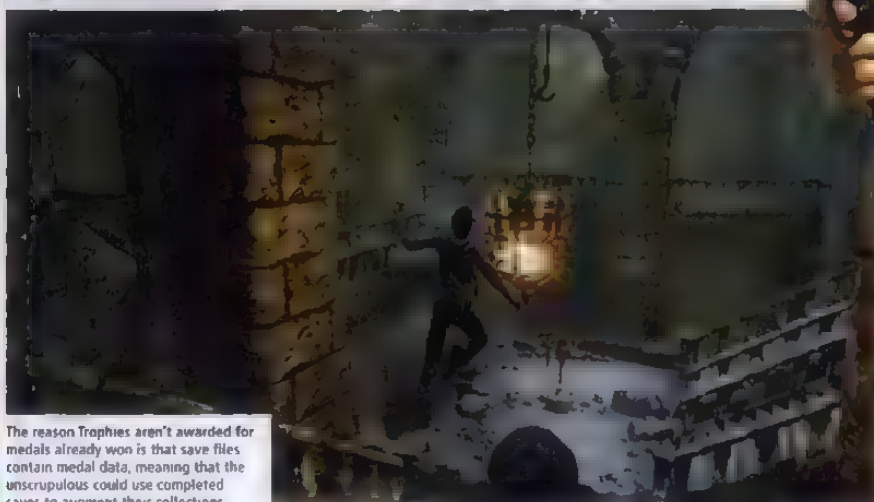
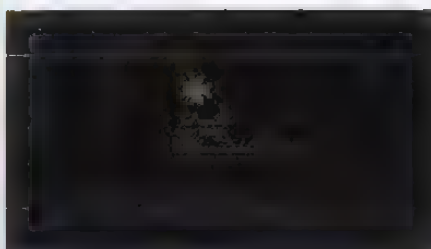
especially in concept research and design. We did a tremendous amount of research for *Uncharted* – our game director, Amy Henning, has this enormous library that she spent months going through, her desk was piled with boxes from Amazon and she watched movies with a notebook on her knee. That's something that novelists and movie people also do, of course.

***Uncharted* has a very strong, cogent storyline that structures its pace, and yet it's the result of fairly serendipitous development. Did the story come first?**

Amy wrote much of the story with [designer] Neil Druckmann and [lead cinematic animator] Josh Scherr, but she's also a very good game designer, and I think she sees it as a process of leapfrogging – you have some core ideas for



When we met, Naughty Dog had just added Trophy support. It had to do very little to implement it, since the medals and skill points already in the game matched Sony's guidelines.



The reason Trophies aren't awarded for medals already won is that save files contain medal data, meaning that the unscrupulous could use completed saves to augment their collections

play, you start to firm them up and see what direction that leads you in, and then you can think about the characters. You can't really write a story and make a game out of it, the story and game emerge together out of this iterative process of trying things out. I've watched Amy do that over and over again on the *Soul Reaver* games, trying to produce dense, tightly woven storytelling that says something about the characters, and also have this tight correspondence with the play mechanics.



How much did you get involved with the story?

I sat in all the story meetings and chipped in bits and pieces. I've done a little writing with Amy in the past, but I always see my role as a kind of director of photography to Amy's director. The DoP isn't just framing the shots, it's organizing the set, making sure the lights are set up on time, making sure the costume and props people are prepared that the actors hit their cues. That's a great way for lead designers to see their work. I spend a lot of my time focused on the concrete moment-to-moment realities, such as that a mechanic will work. Amy is more focused on the big picture. I'd like to propagate that idea of the game director – the creative lead, the vision keeper.

To what extent did your decisions on the design side affect the story?

It's very hard to tell which comes first. Really, we wanted to make a game set in the real world and informed by the pulp classics – the way *Drake* sometimes only just makes jumps and stumbles. We saw it there in the *Indiana Jones* films.

And the way he would swear when a group of enemies jump out.

A lot of that was his voice actor, Nolan North.

Getting toward the end of production we sat Nolan in front of a video of a playthrough and he riffed over it. We showed all the actors everything that we had made and we tried to involve them in the creative process as much as we could. Because all of our actors live in LA and we're based in Santa Monica, we would get them in at a moment's notice. Our actors were a so really invested in the process – I don't think game developers often get that. Big name talent are so busy and expensive they can't give much time.

Europe is now a vital market for Sony. How well did *Uncharted* go down in the region?

I think America has caught up now, but it sold faster in Europe than in the US. Europeans liked that pulp American adventure.

What are your perceptions of the kind of games Europe wants?

California is incredibly culturally diverse, and we have the tendency to just see the world as people. I'm interested in how individuals react. There are some very common human characteristics that I think literature brings out because it gets down to the essence of being a human being, and maybe that's why *Uncharted* had broad success, because it gets to some basic things about character.



Newswire

scrabulous:



Copyright – triple word score!

The hugely popular Scrabulous has been targeted by lawyers acting on behalf of Hasbro, which owns the copyright to Scrabble, and removed from Facebook in the US and Canada. Rajat and Jayant Agarwalla, the creators of the application, have replaced it with Wordscraper, a slightly different tile-based word game – while EA and Hasbro have released an official Facebook version. Interestingly, the official version 'borrows' many ideas originated by Scrabulous for translating the old boardgame on to the web. How many points would you get for 'counter-claim'?

The team player

We discuss strategies with the man who moved from Microsoft to call the shots at EA Sports

Peter Moore seems to be making waves in his new role as head of EA Sports, dismayed PC fans with plans to reassess how EA operates on the platform thanks to piracy and competition from consoles. To listen to them, you'd think it's just not cricket. We caught up with him but, as ever, couldn't catch him out.

So, no more tattoos?

Well, the abuse when I went out on stage was bad, and I'm running out of places to put them.

Now you're working for a thirdparty publisher, what's your take on the industry?

I think in terms of pure revenue growth we're in an incredibly tough economy, and we continue to buck the trend of what's happening to every other industry out there – we expect to see huge growth again year on year. What enthuses me is you've got three consoles holding their own. In Nintendo you have a company that is redefining how we think about games, primarily because they had to after the GameCube. In Microsoft you have a company that's very committed to driving a social element through Xbox Live. And in Sony you have a

company that's been through the wars and knows what it takes, but it's had a few 'mea culpa' statements recently, and its software seems to be coming together. PS3 and 360 are blood brothers, but the online offering of Xbox sets it apart in that world.

As a Brit, how do you head up a division that makes predominantly American sports games?

I've been here 27 years and I've immersed myself in the culture. If you want to understand Americans you need to understand baseball, in the same way cricket is an embodiment of that old British attitude of fair play. I can probably talk these sports with the best of them.

No one resents you for being non-American?

Well, I don't know. I can remember seeing guys

"If you want to understand Americans you need to understand baseball, in the same way cricket is an embodiment of that old British attitude of fair play"

come from college football and have a 15-year pro career and now they're in the broadcast booth. That's how long I've been here. I'm old enough to remember [basketball player] Bill Walton playing, barely. I've been here a long time but I've never lost my roots – the Premier League, rugby union, the Six Nations – and the beauty is that thanks to satellite TV I can watch anything you can watch. I can follow Liverpool everywhere from [the US].

Are you optimistic about Wii Motion Plus?

I've yet to get my hands on it and we don't have devkits yet [as of July], but there are huge possibilities there for sports. Tiger Woods notwithstanding – because that's always benefited from those long swings that the Wii Remote is good at anyway – the level of fine motor skills you can now see is exciting. But you won't see anything from us this year, unless it's dramatically simpler to develop for than I think it will be.

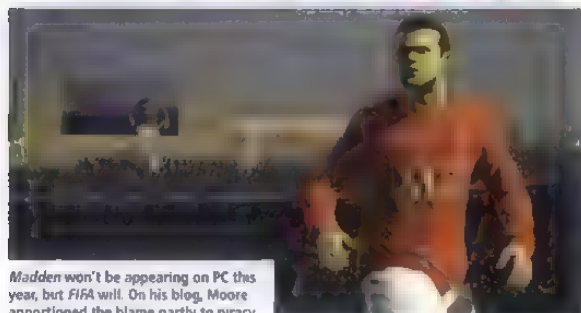
What's your take on the idea N'Gai Croal suggested in his recent Edge column for a subscription-based, much more iterative service for your sports games, rather than constant boxed products?

I understand what you're saying. We put out that disc every year, and there's probably 70 per cent of it that, from a core underlying engine point of view, might be the same and 30 per cent of it that's new and improved. We need to look at ways to bring in more consumers, but there are a lot of technical hurdles. It's going to happen eventually, though that might be ten or 15 years away. I always say we'll tell our grandkids that we used to drive to stores and buy a shiny disc full of data then take it home and put it in a drive and they'll say, 'Why?' Because our houses will all have terabytes of storage built into them.

Are you friends with the PC market again after your recent announcements?

I was never not friends with them! They got upset. We made a business decision [not to ship

Madden, *NASCAR*, *Tiger Woods* and other titles on PC in 2008] and I tried to explain it. You can't take any of that stuff personally. One guy said I can't die fast enough [laughs]. But I've tried to make the point that selling things which can be burned to disc or uploaded is a business model that is slowly fading. The PC is a huge platform for EA. *FIFA* on the PC is a huge IP for us and *NHL* is the same. But that's where the PC is currently a very viable platform – rightly or wrongly we've done a great job in this industry of telling consumers that games are there to be played on television sets. People say, "I love my laptop," and that's fine, but the bottom line is we have an obligation to the shareholders of EA to invest our precious resources into building games that make money – and we're not walking away from the PC in any fashion, but we're going to look at different ways of doing business there, and exactly what N'Gai said is what we're looking at.



Madden won't be appearing on PC this year, but *FIFA* will. On his blog, Moore apportioned the blame partly to piracy

Designed to bring the thrill of the race home



With Game Mode developed in conjunction with XBOX,
100Hz Motion Plus[®] for smooth motion handling, blur free action and Full HD 1080p for
vibrant pictures, the Samsung LCD TV Crystal Design gives you picture quality so good you'll feel like you're in the driving seat. Find out more about
our unique features and picture enhancing technology at samsung.com/uk/tvseries

Samsung LCD TV CRYSTAL DESIGN



SAMSUNG

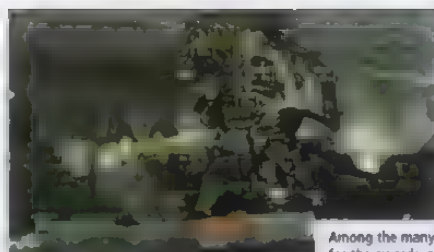


AWARD

Going for gold

Vote for the game you want to grab the **Edge Most Wanted** award at the Golden Joysticks

While the other gongs at the 26th Annual Golden Joysticks celebrate the high points of the past year in gaming, we're offering a chance for the prospective big hitters of tomorrow to scoop an award too, as voted for by you. The ten-strong shortlist of titles in contention for the **Edge Most Wanted** award encompasses games that are up for release later this year and also those that could prove to be the shining lights of the seasons to come. These titles are PlatinumGames' high-heeled actioner, *Bayonetta*, Bethesda's post-apocalyptic RPG *Fallout 3*, Ubisoft's explosive journey into the heart of



Among the many titles in the running for the awards, now in their 26th year are (clockwise from top left) *Fallout 3*, *Far Cry 2*, *Mirror's Edge* and *Infamous*



darkness, *Far Cry 2*, Quantic Dream's visually stunning mystery *Heavy Rain* (see p48), Sucker Punch's superhero fantasy, *Infamous*, DICE's first-person parkour-inspired *Mirror's Edge*, Ubisoft's reinvented *Prince Of Persia*, a Nintendo's online-enabled *Animal Crossing: City Folk* (see p77), Valve's zombie blaster *Left 4 Dead*, and Capcom's co-op enhanced *Resident Evil 5* (see p36).

There are plenty of other categories to vote in besides, including platform-specific awards, a multiplayer award, soundtrack award, individual developer and publisher award, and at the very top of the pie the Virgin Media Ultimate Game

Of The Year award. Among the 15 names eligible for this category are *Super Mario Galaxy*, *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Halo 3*, *Portal*, *Call Of Duty 4*, *Burnout Paradise*, *Metal Gear Solid 4* and *BioShock*. In another year it would be easy to see any one of these games take home the prize, but given the extraordinarily high level of competition, the winner is far from easy to call.

And gamers are not short of opinions on who should win, with half a million votes already cast at the time of writing at www.goldenjoystick.com. The results will be streamed live on Friday October 31 from 12-30pm.



AWARD

Bungie lifts Edge award

Master Chief fights off all-comers to triumph at the Edinburgh Interactive Festival 2008

Bungie beat competitors such as Nintendo and Rockstar to win the **Edge Award For Interactive Innovation** on for *Halo 3*, presented at the Edinburgh Interactive Festival.

The award celebrates the title released in the last 12 months that does the most to further the creative culture of gaming – in other words, to mark out new directions for the form.

This year's award was a closely fought affair with Bungie proving victorious in a shortlist that also included *Grand Theft Auto IV*, *Portal*, *Rock Band*, *Super Mario Galaxy* and *Wii Fit*.

Ultimately, it is the integration and coherence of *Halo 3*'s online content that makes the game stand apart. From its Theater mode to Forge, and the way a party playing through live can seamlessly manoeuvre between them, here's an experience that demonstrates an unparalleled understanding of the potential for console online play. Outside of the game, Bungie.net has been engineered to become a remarkable resource for *Halo 3* stats and communities, providing life for the game even when your Xbox 360 is switched off. *Halo 3* presents a roadmap for the way online will be integrated in videogames in the coming years.

In the light of its incredible success and the number of fans it has attracted, it's easy to overlook all the ideas that are present in *Halo 3* and the remarkably robust manner in which they are implemented, but we hope that this award serves to help credit Bungie for its achievements.



Forge in many ways prefigured *LittleBigPlanet* in terms of providing a collaborative tool that switches straight into play

INCOMING

New games, and updates on games already on the radar

Rage

FORMAT: 360, MAC, PC, PS3 PUBLISHER: EA



Id's game of road warriors, freaks and wildly swung plumbing continues to look way too good to be true, at least on foot. The latest trailer combines cars and miniguns to colourful effect.

Flower, Sun And Rain

FORMAT: DS PUBLISHER: R SING STAR



As if Suda 51's game of bomb-defusal and déjà vu needed any more character, the stylus-driven English-language version arrives in October. Dual screens aside, the visuals seem largely unaltered.

Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe

FORMAT: 360, PS3 PUBLISHER: M DWA



Presumably newly announced characters The Joker and Green Lantern won't be getting their heads punched into lava rivers by Midway's veterans. Jax and Kitana, though, might not be so lucky.

Wallace & Gromit's Grand Adventures

FORMAT: PC, WI PUBLISHER: TELLTALE GAMES



After two successful seasons of Sam & Max, Telltale switches to another problem-solving duo for its latest series. Expect much pointing and clicking to join, we're told, 'contraption assembly'.

Battle Fantasia

FORMAT: 360, PS3 PUBLISHER: 505 GAMES



Riding a wave of fighters to last year's arcade shows, Arc System Works' novel game dishes out varying health points based on fighter size and agility. Currently due on console early next year.

Armored Core For Answer

FORMAT: 360, PS3 PUBLISHER: UBISOFT



No prizes for guessing what the question is. From Software adds the potentially barmy ability to 'cut your way inside' enemies in this oddly titled title 'It's COLOSSAL' says the latest press release.

Skate 2

FORMAT: 360, PS3 PUBLISHER: EA



Fresh from its victory over Tony Hawk's Proving Ground, EA's high roller takes its fight to the law, the fictional city of San Vanelona. Subject, it seems, to a rather inconvenient skateboarding ban.

Perimeter 2: New Earth

FORMAT: PC PUBLISHER: STRATEGY FIRST



Dubiously considered the thinking man's RTS by fans, KDV's unarguably clever terraformer switches publisher and tech while keeping the ideas fresh. Ground versus water is the theme.

Grand Theft Auto IV

FORMAT: PC PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR



If previous PC GTAs are anything to go by, the streets of Liberty should flow with the blood of squashed visual bugs. Don't expect a shortage of fan-made websites and - uh oh - comedy either.

INTERNET GAME OF THE MONTH

Take a pink box from one area of the screen to another - that's all you have to do. And there's a helpful assortment of sticks and wheels with which to do it. In Colin Northway's physics-based puzzle game, however, things are rarely that simple.

For a start, you're limited in the space you've got to build in, reining in your flamboyant imagination somewhat. Your contraption may have to pass an obstacle on its way to the goal, potentially leading to a compromised design.

Humps prove particularly tricky, often flipping your rather remarkable machine on its back, while low ceilings require creeping under in a scaled-down contraption that may cause you problems later.

Addictive as these things often are, all the way back to The Incredible Machine, it's still infuriating to see your wonderful, wobbling mass of wheels spin ineffectually in mid-air when a slope becomes too much. Infuriating, but almost impossible to resist.

IF YOU WANT AN AUDIENCE,
START A FIGHT.

TNA IMPACT!

TOTAL NONSTOP ACTION WRESTLING

WWW.TNAGAMES.COM
WWW.TNAWRESTLING.COM

15

XBOX 360



PLAYSTATION 2

16



PlayStation 2

Wii

MIDWAY
WWW.MIDWAY.COM

Industry

FOCUS

In association with Screen Digest

Browser MMOG success gets investors excited

Screen Digest analyst Piers Harding-Rolls examines the burgeoning browser MMOG sector, and Europe's increasing role in the market

The money men are circling. The recent success of a number of companies in the browser MMOG sector has prompted significant interest from venture capitalists and private equity firms looking to invest in this fast growing segment of the videogame industry. Only recently BigPoint, one of Germany's largest operators in this sector, was acquired by private equity companies for a sum of around €70m (£55m) and it is unlikely that investments and acquisitions will stop there. **Edge** itself recently reported on the success of UK-based company Jagex, developer, publisher and operator of hugely successful title *RuneScape*, a game that continues to grow its subscriber numbers with the release of *RuneScape HD*, a graphically upgraded version of the game. If Jagex was to be acquired it would be for a sum far larger than £55m.

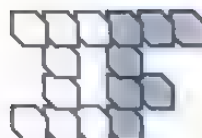
While Jagex in the UK has been a leading light

for the browser MMORPG sector for a number of years (Screen Digest identified it as the second biggest MMOG subscription title in the west in 2006 by revenue behind *WOW*), continental Europe, and in particular Germany, has been a very successful breeding ground for browser MMOG operators in the last few years. Companies such as Gameforge, BigPoint, Travian and Innogames are some of a new breed of browser MMOG operator that is riding a commercial wave driven by heavy consumer interest in this sector. That Germany is a starting point for many of these companies is no surprise given the territory's strong interest in PC games and online games services.

Not only is Europe home to a number of leading operators, it also commands a bigger share of the western browser MMOG market. In a reversal of the mainstream subscription MMOG sector, where North America has always been a



Dofus, developed and published by French company Ankama Games, is primarily pay-to-play, but still offers a limited amount of free content



more mature market compared to Europe, in 2007 Europe represented 57 per cent of the western browser MMOG market compared to North America's 43 per cent. Aside from the key role played by European operators in the market, the reason for Europe's rapid adoption stems from the fact that most consumers with a PC and internet connection can play browser games. As such, browser MMOGs have become popular across a wide number of eastern European markets as well as the more traditional 'big five' markets of UK, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. For example *Travian*, a very popular MMORTS, has

While the browser MMOG market is still small, it is making substantial contributions to the overall western MMOG market.

significant numbers of players in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Russia and Poland

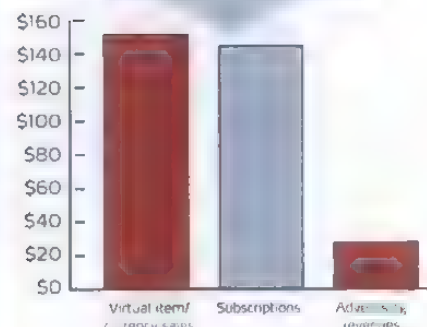
So how are operators going about monetising gamers? As a vast majority of browser MMOGs are free to access and download (if needed) operators are employing 'velvet rope' business models that charge for certain elements of premium content either through premium subscriptions or through microtransactions for the sale of virtual items or currency. These two primary business models account for a large majority of revenue within the sector and are currently fairly evenly matched in share (see graph). Additionally, operators are also seeking ways to monetise free users who have not been converted into paying customers, and this is often done through advertising. For example, *RuneScape* advertises to its free users using banners around the gameplay window.

While the browser MMOG market is still very small compared to games retail (around \$340m or £170m last year alone), this sector is making substantial contributions to the overall western MMOG market, and is set to experience strong growth over the next five years. Aside from the obvious advantages of using the easily available and familiar internet browser technology to increase the addressable market, growth will continue to be prompted by the expansion of services into new markets, the availability of lots of content for gamers (browser MMOGs are comparatively cheap to produce compared to traditional MMOGs) and the use of business models and content that are attractive to more mainstream online gamers. Lastly, as browser technology improves, the ability to create good looking and sophisticated content is evolving, meaning that the gap between traditional MMOGs and browser MMOGs is slowly closing – as shown by the recent release of *RuneScape HD*. This new breed of browser games is likely to engage the audience even more effectively than its predecessors.

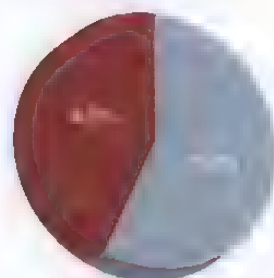


Disney's Club Penguin allows you to play for free, but a paid-for membership is required to access the game's full facilities, such as clothing and hats for your penguin. As the game's audience is young and often credit card-less, scratchcards can be bought

Western browser
MMOG market
business model
revenue, 2007 (\$m)



Western browser
MMOG market
regional share, 2007



Europe

North America

**Leading browser
MMOG companies**

[illegible]

screen

www.screen Digest.com



Breaking with convention?

Famitsu's Koji Aizawa gives the Japanese perspective on E3



Scaled down and chased from LA, last year's E3 was a sad affair. With this year's return from Santa Monica to its traditional home in LA's Convention Center, there were expectations that the flagging trade show might have turned things around, achieving something of its former glory. I have to say that, despite the switch

back to its original location, it felt very much like a rerun of last year. But maybe it's not the conference's fault so much as the exhibitors' – we simply didn't see much of those long-anticipated titles and hardware.

Microsoft's was certainly the one conference of the big three that really managed to pull itself out of the melee – perhaps partly as a result of the conference's natural North American bias. But even from a Japanese perspective, the biggest news was certainly the release of

Final Fantasy XIII – the Xbox 360 title that was believed to be exclusive to the PS3. Though the Xbox 360 version won't be released in Japan, it suggests that EFX, it's not being developed to take advantage of the full specs of the PS3. It makes perfect sense from a business side, but it was no doubt a tougher decision for the creators who were excited to employ the full power of

SonyStar and Buzz! Microsoft may be building up its strength in an important market, but you can't help but feel that SCE has been doing this for years now – and while that's a credit to SCE's experimental development, there's a risk that Japanese gamers now find these concepts a bit tired. But putting this aside, along with the similarities you could draw between Xbox 360's

Nintendo remains the only company of the three making really original use of hardware, presenting new titles that work with the Wii Balance Board as well as new peripherals like the WiSpeak and the Wii Motion Plus.

Sony's machine, to say nothing of the disappointment for the Japanese PS3 gamer.

In terms of the remaining Xbox 360 line-up, *Gears Of War 2* and *Fable 2* were charismatic, but the really striking thing was Microsoft's approach to casual gaming, which saw it move closer to the model pioneered by PlayStation 2 with a range of products bearing great similarity to *EyeToy Play*

avatars and Nintendo's Miis, overall, Microsoft still had the largest variety of products amongst the big three.

Nintendo remains the only company of the three making really original use of hardware, presenting new titles that work with the Wii Balance Board as well as new peripherals like the WiSpeak and the Wii Motion Plus. On the



Final Fantasy XIII's arrival on 360 was a surprising piece of news and a boon for Microsoft. Elsewhere, the publishers' output outshone that of the manufacturers, with EA's *Mirror's Edge* upstaging the platform's exclusive line up.

software's de- Nintendo aimed at a wide audience with *Animal Crossing* for the Wii. *Wii Music* and *Wii Sports Resort*. While the audience at E3 seemed disappointed at how few hardcore titles were revealed, there's a feeling in Japan that Mr. Iwata's and Mr. Miyamoto's philosophies and concepts are now pretty well proven. They would never announce something if it wasn't all well thought out. Right?

Meanwhile, the general feeling about SCE was that it is a company with both hardware and software development between cycles. I can't help thinking this isn't much of an excuse. *Resistance 2* and *God Of War III* are impressive enough titles and they will certainly have an impact. However, in general, Sony's offering felt lightweight. Despite the demos running in the corner, Home continues to be pushed back more and more, and when it comes to video on demand or online distribution, I can't help thinking that Sony's staying further and further behind Microsoft

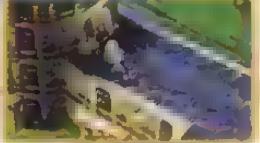
and this in spite of having a company like Sony Pictures next to its group. Admittedly here in Japan, the PSP is doing really well, selling more units than the DS week after week, but we have had no real announcement for the portable. I really hope it is going to be far more exciting time for the PSP during the forthcoming Game Convention or Tokyo Game Show this autumn.

Looking beyond the big conferences at E3, EA's *Mirror's Edge* and Ubisoft's *Prince Of Persia* were the two titles which really stood out as having the potential to reach Japanese gamers, who have such a demanding stance when it comes to quality requirements. In fact, Ubisoft is one of the rare western game developers and publishers that seems to have a really good feel for the Japanese market. And I suppose that's the one thing you can say about this year's E3, with the platform holders themselves putting on such a poor show, the other publishers had a chance to shine.

Siren: New Translation



Dragon Quest V



**Weekly Famitsu (Enterbrain)
Japanese sales: July 21-27**

- Game/weekly sales/lifetime sales**
Dragon Quest V (Square Enix, DS): 185,061 (864,503)
Powerful Proyakku 15 (Konami, PS2): 86,950 (NE)
Eiyu Densetsu (Nihon Falcom, PSP): 48,737 (NE)
Gundam Battle Universe (BNG, PSP): 40,198 (193,378)
Siren: New Translation (SCE, PS3): 36,341 (NE)
Wii Fit (Nintendo, Wii): 30,048 (2,365,304)
Reborn DS (Takara Tomy, DS): 27,732 (NE)
Wario Land Shake (Nintendo, Wii): 24,291 (NE)
Powerful Proyakku 15 (Konami, Wii): 19,991 (NE)
Mario Kart Wii (Nintendo, Wii): 19,129 (NE)

AVAILABLE NOW ON XBOX 360®



Unreal TOURNAMENT



INCLUDING

- 5 new Xbox 360 exclusive maps
- All new 2 player split-screen
- Xbox 360 exclusive characters



www.unrealtournament3.com



Jump in.



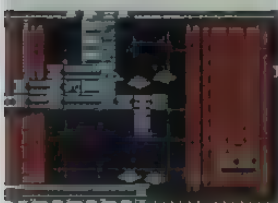
XBOX 360 LIVE

Hype

The future of electronic entertainment

Edge's most wanted

Mega Man 9



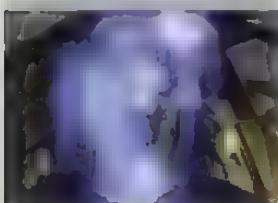
Let's face it – he's been a bit rubbish for years now, but the NES games were great. Never thought we'd say it, but we can't wait for the real return of the blue bomber. PS3 360 Wii CAPCOM

LittleBigPlanet



The ideas keep flowing out of Media Molecule, and now we have the evidence that the team has the chops to realise them. The best reason to have a PS3 is nearly here. PS3 SCE

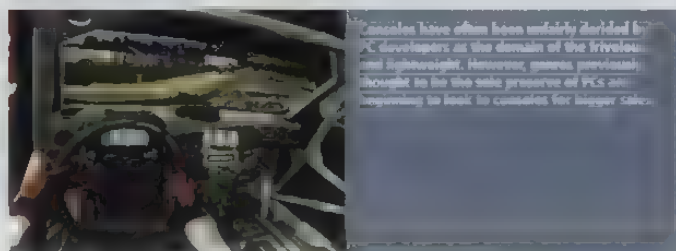
Halo...?



Bungie's teasing acceptance video for the Edge Award for Interactive Innovation was cryptic, but at least stated the fight isn't finished yet. This is one war we hope persists. X360 MICROSOFT

Sim vim

Do hardcore simulations have a future outside of PCs?



Race Pro is something of an experiment for SimBin Studios, representing the Swedish PC racing simulation specialist's first excursion into the console market since the aborted 360 version of *GTR*. At first, you might think this is a sign of desperation – the dual effect of the rampant piracy scarring PC game sales and spiralling development costs forcing a niche PC developer to think more broadly to achieve the same profits that it used to enjoy. And isn't there a big risk that the market for such games doesn't exist on the console? *Forza Motorsport 2* may have demonstrated that console gamers aren't averse to sim-led racers, but SimBin's extreme focus on realism is on another scale entirely.

Such suppositions aren't unreasonable given the number of big-name developers who have decried the impact of piracy – not least of which is Crytek, whose CEO Cevat Yerli recently let out a public groan of despair regarding flagging sales figures on PC – but the issue isn't one that developers are helpless to tackle. Blizzard will make *Diablo III*'s default mode multiplayer, ensuring that only legitimate copies can access the

developer's Battle net service. Similarly, Valve's Steam system offers a means of reaching consumers without much risk of piracy at all – a facility SimBin has been a beneficiary of with *Race 07*.

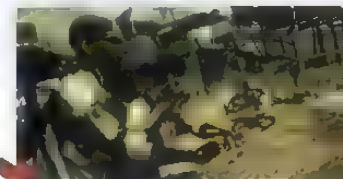
It begins to look like *Race Pro*'s appearance on console isn't motivated by the harsh retail environment of PCs so much as the fact that console gamers have proven themselves to be just as receptive to many of the same genres as PC gamers – so long as the controls have been adequately translated. *Fallout 3*, for example, is the next step in Bethesda's successful experiment to bring a traditional PC series to console which began back with *Xbox Morrowind*. The RTS genre too has made several attempts to bridge the gap despite being designed around the mouse and keyboard – the boldest of which is the forthcoming voice-controlled *Tom Clancy's EndWar*. In fact, you might challenge the conventional logic that there are many genres which still benefit one platform over another. The hardcore simulation is among the last to fall, and SimBin's move is no doubt an adventurous one, but also with precedent for great success.

32

Fallout 3
360 PC PS3

34

Race Pro
360



36

Resident Evil 5
360 PS3

37

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3
360 PC



38

Crysis: Warhead
PC

39

The Last Guy
PS3

39

Captain Rainbow
Wii

40

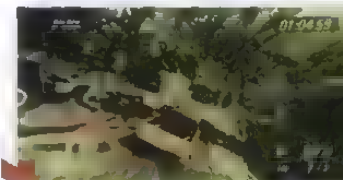
The Godfather II
360 PC PS3

42

Multiwinia: Survival Of The Flattest
PC

42

Gridrunner+++
360



43

MotorStorm Pacific Rift
PS3

44

Tomb Raider Underworld
360 DS PC PS2 PS3 Wii

44

Pure
360 PC PS3

45

Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars
Wii

45

Tornado
DS

FORMAT 360, PC, PS3
PUBLISHER BETHESDA
DEVELOPER IN HOUSE
ORIGIN US
RELEASE AUTUMN
PREVIOUSLY IN £179, £189



Those disturbed by the level scaling in *Oblivion* will be pleased to know that an excursion far into the wasteland leads to an untimely death from a super-mutant

Fallout 3

Like a post-apocalyptic Time Team, we scrape back DC's irradiated soil

As a first experience of the game, it seems somewhat familiar. You've emerged blinking into the sunlight from a subterranean vault, and stretching before you is a panoramic view of a genuine world, the horizon stretching ahead tantalisingly. A pathway lies in front of you, but as your gaze twitches towards the periphery of your vision, there's the sense that you could head off in any direction and discover what is out there.

And then you glance towards the bottom right of your screen, and you see a gun. The cynics were right. *Fallout 3* really is *Oblivion* with guns.

Bethesda, giving us our first substantial hands-on play with its controversial sequel to

While it may be *Oblivion* with guns, that label is as obfuscatory and useless as arguing that *Planescape Torment* was *Fallout* with swords

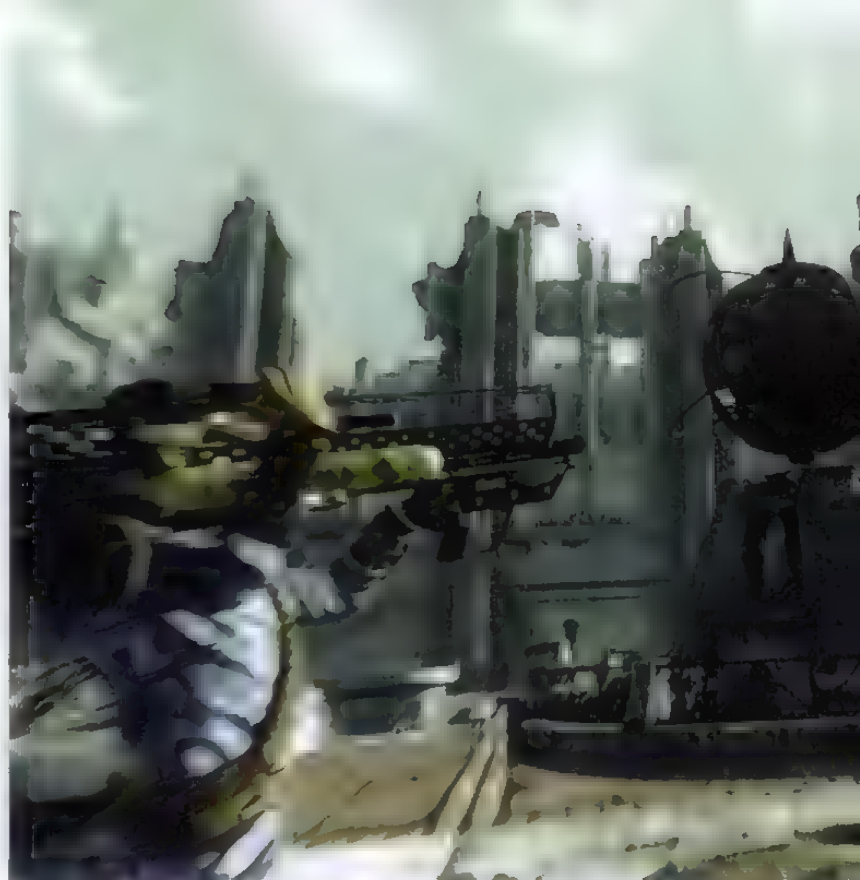


the Black Isle PC classic, start us not at the beginning, but the beginning of the real game. It's the moment analogous to you leaving the first dungeon in *Oblivion*, with your previous youth in the Vault acting as an extended character-creation and training sequence. In other words, it's the first point you get to truly define your destiny – and, for many, that section was one of *Oblivion*'s high points – the second when all is possibility.

Seeing it reprised here isn't something to set alarm bells ringing, it's actually enormously comforting. So while it may be *Oblivion* with guns, that label is as obfuscatory and useless as arguing that *Planescape Torment* was *Fallout* with swords and a regenerating corpse.

For a start, the sensation of seeing this de-saturated wasteland isn't one of wonder and proto-Tolkien joy. It's a little sadness

A Robby-the-Robot-inspired mechanoid adds to the retro-futurism of the game, though there are more obviously sophisticated artificial lifeforms, too



seeing burnt-out homesteads filled with discarded toys – and it's moments like this when the power of a more technologically capable engine is ideal for selling the world to you. Secondly, while it's *Oblivion* with guns, it's not as if you have to shoot them. While others at our demo session experiment with the extremes of freedom available, opening fire at sheriffs and other meagre bastions of civilisation in this post-apocalyptic hell – which the game is quite happy to accommodate – we choose to approach it pretty much straight. We spend a good chunk of our time talking to the inhabitants of Mad Max 3-style settlement Megaton before deciding to take a random quest which sends us trudging into the wasteland getting embroiled in small-town politics at our destination and, in transit, finding a few distractions upon discovering an abandoned underground station.

In fact, it's only when it begins shooting that the game comes awry a little. The VATS system – where you use a pause-time system to call shots at different areas of the body of your targets, spending a regenerating pool of action points – isn't quite all we hoped for. When it works, its cinematic shots show the shtetl camp ultraviolence off to its best, with heads dissolving into red mist. When it doesn't work, it leads to unfortunately silly-looking shots. Sadly, this is mostly showcased by one of the most common of the early enemies. While a wolf's attack sequence involves backing off before leaping, the bigger more rats simply charge and leap at



It remains to see whether the VATS system is a genuine boon or simply a sop to the turn-based traditionalists



you insistently – in other words, at close range they're very close, meaning that when you select VATS you're shown the unfortunate sight of your character bending over and unloading round after round into a beast running against his legs. And even when it works there's the nagging sense, at least with an unskilled and therefore inaccurate character, that you'd be better off just pointing the gun at your target and pulling the trigger yourself.

There are other mixed signals. While it's far too early to make a call on the quality of its writing, the character voice-acting is considerably better than the often disturbingly stiff inhabitants of *Oblivion*. There's still a sense that the characters don't quite act enough, however, compared to

what *Vampire: Bloodlines* did some years ago in terms of physical performance in a similar straight-headshot game. This is somewhat lacking. While, inevitably, the clarity of the original *Fallouts* text will be lost, a fully voiced game should make the most of what it's got. *Fallout 3* doesn't quite do that. However, as a mechanic, the conversation system appears to be working well. While there are many examples of the traditional RPG trypsin "Yes, I'll do it / yes, I'll do it for money / I will / Kill / KO", there are generally more options, which seem to respond sensibly to your character's makeup. For example, playing someone with the "Lucky" perk, an extra bit more amorous, cute, or cutesy, or it's less an embarrassment, so many, stealth is fairly

integrated as an alternative approach, as well as various technical options. Special mention must be made of the hacking system, whose password guessing is one of the more impressively naturalistic attempts to make a hacking sim that is neither *Tron*, as in *System Shock 2*, or clearly a transplanted mechanism from another game (as in *BioShock*).

An hour of *Fallout* only scratches the surface, of course. This is an epic game and the real pleasure will be seeing how those initial choices develop into the game proper. While reservations apply to some of the details, there's certainly a structure that should support an appealing adventure. Will it live up to its lineage? For some, that is the killer question.

While exploring the wasteland is seamless, entering a doorway to an internal location requires a pause while it loads – but it doesn't prove overly unobtrusive. As in *Oblivion*, when you first travel to a new location you have to walk. Afterwards, a quick travel system becomes available.



Despite being set a couple of centuries after the war, which fossilised *Fallout's* culture in an iconic vision of the 1950s, there's still plenty of radiation around. In a similar manner to *Stalker*, you must pay attention to hotspots when travelling to avoid receiving a dose. It's especially important in the health-management parts of the game. Drinking water is all very well when it's been purified; however, straight from the tap will lead that Gelger counter to begin ticking. If you're more desperate you can sip directly from the toilet bowl for an even more toxic experience. The first casualty of nuclear war is human dignity, it seems. And billions of people, obviously.

FORMAT 360
PUBLISHER ATARI
DEVELOPER SIMBIN
ORIGIN SWEDEN
RELEASE NOVEMBER

Race Pro

The preeminent PC race simulator specialist turns to the console side

Console debutante it may be, but independent racing simulation studio Simbin has been quietly plying its trade for several years since its birth as a mod team for EA's *F1* titles. Carving out success and respect in an arena driven, literally, by the traditionalist and austere PC sim racing crowd, which continues to actively support elderly yet authentic titles such as *Grand Prix Legends* and *Richard Burns Rally* is a feat indeed. The Swedish developer

"One of the Swedish Touring Car Championship drivers was not so familiar with the Anderstorp circuit, so he used our game to find a new line"



Perhaps predictably, the various locations are dictated by the calendar of the WTCC, though a pair of US circuits, Laguna Seca and Road America, are included to generate appeal across the pond. No Nurburgring as yet, but given that Roos began his racing career there, it's no doubt a priority

pursues realism with fundamentalist zeal, relying on the reality of motor racing to be just as intoxicating as anything arcade merchants could imagine. This uncompromising approach was never more evident than in *GTR2* - a comprehensive simulation of the FIA GT championship that earned a place in *Edge Presents The 100 Best Videogames* last year.

With *Race Pro*, Simbin takes up the mantle recently abandoned by Codemasters in its *Race Driver* series, shooting for breadth as well as depth. The garage may be stocked almost exclusively with race-prepared vehicles, but they range from near-standard Mini Coopers to fragile, frightening open-wheeled Formula cars - a performance curve that encompasses some 800 brake horsepower (see 'Torque sport'). Of course the studio's primary hope is to broadside the console audience by furnishing each vehicle with a physics model far more sophisticated and plausible than anything players have

been exposed to before, and one that's directly comparable to real racing. "Many professional drivers use our games," claims **Henrik Roos**, Simbin CEO and former GT racer in a Dodge Viper, no less. "One of the Swedish Touring Car Championship drivers was not so familiar with the Anderstorp circuit, so he used our game to try and find a new line. He went there, used his new line, took pole position and won both races."

The obsession with authenticity is a rich seam that runs through every element of the *Race Pro* preview code we've seen. Name another developer that takes the time to texture the untidy globs of welding on an exposed section of rollcage, for example. It's endemic of a passionate team pulling in a single direction, with little in the way of external pressure or responsibility beyond its own ideals. "Simbin has a philosophy that we should finance our own games," Roos explains. "We take the publisher in at a very late stage, because otherwise they try to

manipulate us and tell us what to do and so on. We like to have freedom to create what we believe in, and that's that reality is more fun than fantasy. Other games give points for sliding or hitting things, but we think to drive a Saleen S7 on the straight and to see and hear the vibrations is fun enough."

Of course, the traditional criticism levelled at all flavours of vehicle simulation is that they'll require proficiency equal to that of a professional pilot to operate, something that Roos refutes emphatically: "It's not going to be more difficult to drive than *Project Gotham* or *Forza Motorsport* - we've tried those games. This is what journalists always write, but we hope that when you have a review version, you will find out that it's not more difficult than any other game, but that it is more challenging in the end." Currently the control system is 'pre-beta', and not implemented to a level at which we could ascertain the validity of that claim, but Simbin was able to demonstrate the



Simbin promises fraught, 12-player Live multiplayer races and a unique two-player hot seat mode for local games, in which the AI assumes control of the dormant player's vehicle. It's certainly a novel replacement for technically challenging spitscreen, but having control wrested from you as you're sizing up an overtake could be hugely frustrating.





presence of a number of customisable driver aids, which should soften the challenge for initiates. In addition, handing difficulty class of vehicle and AI difficulty are all separately modifiable options, meaning a bespoke user-defined challenge should, in theory, be achievable. The most accurate barometer will, no doubt be the confirmed Xbox Live demo and Roos cites this as crucial in showing *Race Pro's* accessibility in comparison to more established console titles.

Perhaps the game's most surprising turn, given the scale of the operation, is that the bespoke Lizard Engine passes visual muster. While Codemasters' *Grid* maintains a narrow edge in overall aesthetic, *Race Pro's* art direction, rather predictably, dispenses with extraneous graphical finery in favour of more subtle effects. That's not to say there aren't flourishes, and the sun's reflection on rubberised portions of the racing line, for example, demonstrates a measured and natural approach to making the often topographically barren circuits engaging.

It seems that, an aborted first attempt with THQ notwithstanding, Simbin may benefit from extreme fortuitous timing for its console debut. With *Turn 10* quiet about its next project, and Bizarre Creations working on an as-yet-unannounced title for Activision, the Christmas period appears open for the developer to make its unique mark on Xbox 360. As is so often the case in motorsport, there's no question that a small, independent team would struggle in direct competition with the sheer scale of manufacturer-backed projects. Given console players' long-exploited taste for authentic racing titles, though, Simbin's unwavering faith in its pursuit of replicating reality may yet see this particular underdog richly rewarded.



Race Pro also marks an uncharacteristic first foray into production models for Simbin. The line-up is slim, but Top Gear favourites such as the Koenigsegg CCR, Audi R8 and Gumpert Apollo provide an interesting and challenging tonic to the endless grip and aggressive acceleration of the thoroughbreds.



Outside of the central WTCC championship, Simbin is not beholden to a particular entry list. The resultant fictional GT classes may lack names such as Porsche and Ferrari, but marques such as Aston Martin and Corvette are equally relevant.



Torque sport

Race Pro's stable centres primarily on race-prepared vehicles, and range from 200bhp to a frankly terrifying 1,050bhp. The majority of circuit-centric disciplines are accounted for, with GT, touring, prototype, open-wheel and kit car classes all unlocked as players progress through the yet-to-be-unveiled career mode – the selection mirrors the content in Simbin's most recent PC release, *GTR Evolution*. Highlights are the flagship World Touring Car Championship, which is deeply reminiscent of the original two *TOCA* titles, and the three separate GT classes, which are an unashamed attempt to evoke the spirit of *GTR2*. There is also a coherent DLC strategy in place that will, over the course of five monthly content packs, see a return to *GT Legends*-esque historic touring cars and the addition of the Spa-Francorchamps circuit.

FORMAT 360, PS3
PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER IN HOUSE
ORIGIN JAPAN
RELEASE MARCH 13
PREVIOUSLY IN £192

Resident Evil 5

Capcom applies the electrodes to Resi 4 to see if it twitches

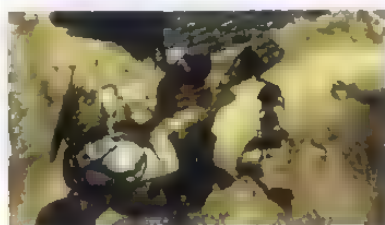


It's got a little of the shiny waxworks about it, but RE5 is still a fantastic looking game. The only slight disappointment is the faintly wooden animation of the infected hordes, which share a lot with RE4's Ganados

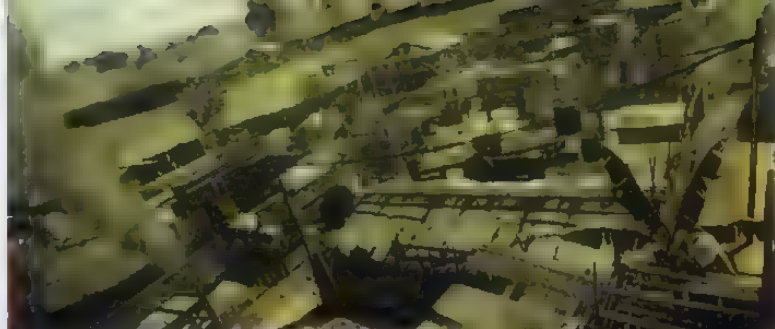
By now you may well have taken part in discussions concerning the fact that *Resident Evil 5* retains the control system from *Resident Evil 4* more or less unchanged. At the same time, you probably haven't forgotten that *Resident Evil 4* was one of the best games of the last generation, and has arguably yet to be surpassed as a third-person actioner.

After all, controls are only as good as what's been built around them. And our most recent experience with *Resident Evil 5* has done a lot to reassure us that the series' essential attributes outside of the joyypad are well represented, along with some significant additions to the formula that alter the feel of what you're facing. The most obvious is the number of the infected. The first area of two we've played through is relatively open, though slightly more enclosed than *Resident Evil 4*'s Ganado village, and filled with enemies. At times, up to 15 infected will be running at you, and concentrated use of blockades, fences and gaps, combined with basic fencing, is the only way to stay ahead and gain enough time for a few pinpoint headshots.

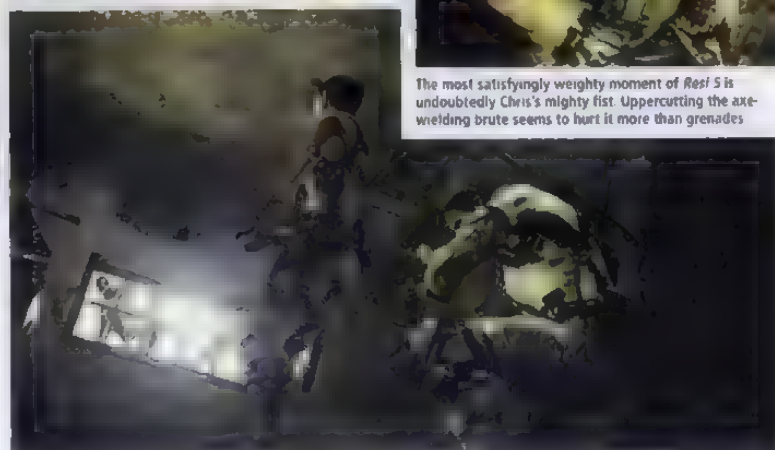
There's no sign of him so far, but the presence of gold hints that we may yet see everyone's favourite travelling merchant. On that note, the weapon switch and item pickups in RE5 happen in realtime – that is, Chris swaps his weapons in and out of their holsters with a button press or can search his equipment by holding down Y. Series stalwarts might find seeing Chris crouch down to pick up an item or grabbing it from a surface odd – but the time it takes to do this when enemies are running for you changes resource-gathering from a no-brainer to a fraught decision.



All enemies are capable of grabbing either Chris or Sheva, necessitating some speedy assistance. There are a so some athletic challenges that need one partner to help the other negotiate. Hardly groundbreaking stuff, but tried and tested.



The most satisfyingly weighty moment of *Resi 5* is undoubtedly Chris's mighty fist. Upper-cutting the axe-wielding brute seems to hurt it more than grenades.



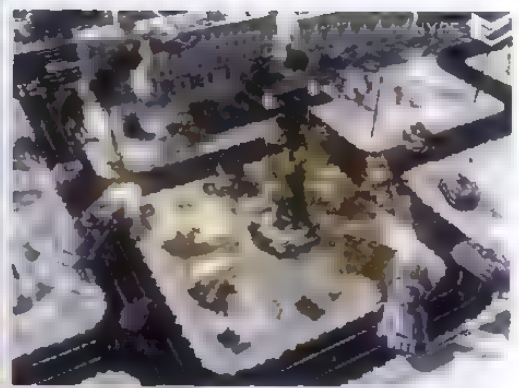
The other significant change is the addition of Sheva. Fighting through such crowds with AI assistance is a completely new dynamic for the series, and it splits the attention of the seemingly insurmountable numbers of enemies, opening gaps where you might not expect them, and allowing you to set up traps relatively easily. It also means that your progression (a constant, given the continual threat of being overwhelmed) has to always take into account her position: you'll need her help, and she'll need yours. The command function isn't yet as fully featured as we hoped to see, but it will eventually allow you to influence her actions more directly.

There are moments during this extended battle when you'll be surrounded, cut off

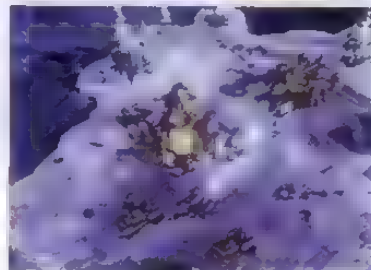
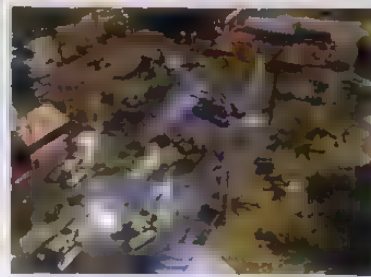
from your partner, and standing still to shoot seems like a suicidal option, since the limitations of the control scheme come into play. It's certainly true that it can feel clunky mainly thanks to aiming speed, but strategy will allow you to prevail against the hordes. Though it may seem a little like trying to make a silk purse from a zombie's ear, the nuances of the control system at least add to the panic as two infected split from different sides of the mob and charge you.

Aside from these basics, there are all the series staples you might expect. Crates and explosive barrels return, with the latter packing significantly more oomph. A slight yammer version of RE4's chainsaw-toting Ganado pops up at one stage, and will happily slice through his conspirator to get to you, while a hulking monstrosity with a axe is destined to end many unwary players' lives. Add in some neat cinematic touches, such as Chris' communication with a helicopter pilot, and the hope is that the tight pacing and twists of *Resident Evil 4* can be carried over into a more expansive setting. In short, *Resident Evil 5* is going to be like *Resident Evil 4*, but bigger, much better looking, and with many more enemies. Which isn't a bad prospect.





A tastefully caricaturish drawing of a sci-fi Japanese empire wouldn't be complete without kamikaze units. One high-level ship can choose to ram enemies, dealing out huge damage but scuttling itself in the process

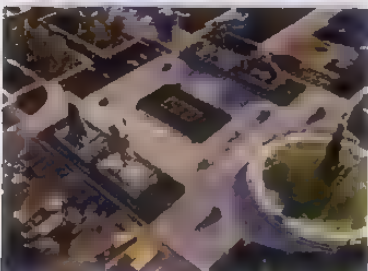


One Japanese superweapon, clearly inspired by a genuine WWII plan to attack the US, fills the sky with bombs hung beneath balloons. They float slowly down on to the enemy, giving them a chance to blow them up before they land – though they may just pop the balloons

Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3

Who would win in a fight between a bear and a robot? Answer: everyone

Time travel is rarely a good military strategy, it seems. The first *Red Alert* game saw Einstein attempting to avert world war by erasing Hitler from history, only for Stalin to step eagerly into the vacuum. This time around, the Russians think it'd be a good idea to take Einstein out of the equation in order to weaken the Allies, only to find that this enacts a chain of events resulting in the ascension of Japan as a third rival to global domination.



Players must ensure they have a force capable of fending off ground, air and sea attacks. While many units straddle two of these, it's tricky to keep all of your bases covered

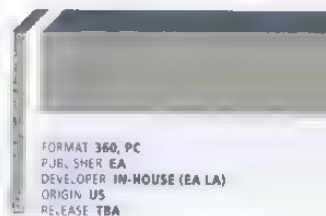
In practice, what this means is that *Red Alert 3* sees psychic Japanese schoolgirls and giant robots join the ranks of ludicrous unit types alongside armoured bears, killer dolphins and, of course, Tesla coils. As part of a series happy to ignore the gritty actualities of warfare, *Red Alert 3* is as colourful, preposterous and explosive an RTS game as its predecessors – and lightning fast. But the giddy speed with which the game is paced doesn't mean, as it did in *Command & Conquer 3*, that a multiplayer battle can be decided within ten minutes. *Red Alert 3* extends the rapid back-and-forth between opponents by more clearly differentiating the arenas of air, ground and sea – the latter seeing much greater emphasis than in previous games, allowing you to build at sea, out of reach of your enemy's infantry. However, many vehicles are amphibious while some can transform from ground units into planes, making it possible to elude attackers restricted to other arenas. Working out exactly what your enemy is building, and what arena you should focus on in order to counter or circumvent their efforts, is vital and the factions each have speedy scout units for this very purpose.

The increased round length allows for players to obtain higher-level units and weaponry. In a single skirmish we had ample opportunity to try out targeted strikes and time bombs – two of five tiers of super-weaponry unlocked by accruing points as the game progresses. While the Russians get the clunking heft of steampunk-fantasy units fronted by slinky Soviet commando Natasha

Volokova, the Japanese high-level units are plucked straight from the world of manga – King Ono, a giant samurai mech with laser eyes, is joined by Yunko Omega, described to us as K. Bill's psycho adolescent Gogo Yubari with the power of Akira.

The Japanese also have an unusual advantage in not being restricted to building within a tight radius of their main base. Instead, they drop mobile construction units that can then be deposited and turned into buildings anywhere on the map. Useful though this is, it gives players plenty of rope with which to hang themselves, tempting them to overstretch themselves by defending multiple locations. The ability to repurpose transforming Japanese ground units for naval assault or air bombardment also strains the player's ability to micromanage, while lending them greater versatility.

These tensions leave room for some rather subtle tactics, and our time with the game suggests that for all its instantly gratifying bombast, *Red Alert 3* has not compromised on nuance or depth – things you might not expect from a game that pictures war bears against robots, but are nonetheless very welcome.



FORMAT 360, PC
PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER IN-HOUSE (EA LA)
ORIGIN US
RELEASE TBA

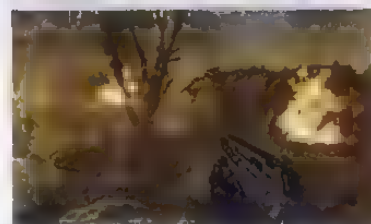
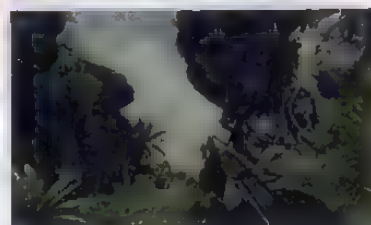


The *Red Alert* series has little intention to provide an earnest simulation of war, and frequently veers into delightful absurdity. While the simple presence of war bears is a more obvious example of this, one other thing that had us chuckling was the ability to have various infantry units mount vehicles to grant them special abilities: fill an Allied hydrofoil full of attack dogs and it grows a pair of giant speakers with which to blast amplified roars at the enemy.





While Sykes is a more than competent killing machine on foot, he'll need more than a nano muscle suit and twin pistols to take on a chopper. There's usually an RPG lying around for such occasions.



Crytek's ambition to get *Warhead* running on older PCs doesn't appear to have prohibited stunning, occasionally photo-real scenery. It looks even prettier when on fire, as the game gives you ample opportunity to discover

Crysis: Warhead

Spec ops goes lower-spec, as we drop into the nano muscle suit of Sergeant Sykes

Despite Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli's hyperbolic claim that 15 to 20 legitimate copies of *Crysis* were downloaded for every purchase, it seems like the company might have twigged that defeating piracy is not the only way to boost sales. Not only has *Warhead*, its PC-only standalone expansion, been optimised to run on machines of lower specifications than the original game, but it has also been optimised to the tastes of a more mainstream audience, weaned on the heavily scripted high drama of *Call Of Duty* and its ilk.

The developer has said that this wouldn't mean that the game did away with the free-roaming expansiveness that has been the hallmark of the series. Nonetheless, the levels

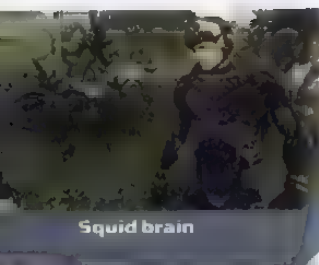
we played through were certainly quite directed experiences – tunnelling us down a wide dirt track fringed by jungle. The linearity of this sequence was understandable given the strictness of our objective – to escort another vehicle to safety while detonating the surrounding Korean forces in a thunderous barrage of tank fire. However, the claims that we could hop things up, hop out of our tank and take on troops on foot proved to be more a theoretical possibility than a practical alternative – only the tank's guns could feasibly take on the endless assault of Korean armour and air support.

Fortunately, in the subsequent section the nano suit's various abilities are put to much more use, demonstrating that they're

just as tautly balanced as in *Warhead*'s predecessor. Open infantry engagement, a hill defence battle that followed the escort mission, gave ample opportunity to experiment with different solutions. Later, an assault on an a submarine base proved equally freeform, with the suit's powers offering a much greater variety of alternatives than simply the choice of direction from which to approach.

Warhead certainly piles on the pyrotechnics with giddy eagerness, delivering more earthshaking explosions within the short space of those few levels than many other shooters attempt over their entire courses. If the sequence we played is indicative of the rest of the game, *Warhead*'s switch of protagonist to the aptly monikered Sergeant 'Psycho' Sykes has resulted in such cranked-up, all-out, gun-toting mania that it makes Nomad's expedition feel like a trip to Mea. How much of that previous game's potential for sedate strategising, stealth and freeform approaches will be axed in favour of bigger detonations remains to be seen. But when a game delivers such a ready supply of thrills, will we really miss it?

FORMAT: PC
PUBLISHER: EA
DEVELOPER: CRYTEK BUDAPEST
ORIGIN: HUNGARY
RELEASE: AUTUMN



Squid brain

One criticism levelled at *Warhead*'s predecessor was that it took a bit of a downturn when the aliens showed up. Not only did the levels become narrower and your actions more prescribed, but the enemy AI simply wasn't as entertaining to fight, instead employing intentionally inhuman behaviour. Although we didn't face these opponents during our hands-on session, Crytek claims that the alien AI has been altered in *Warhead* to be a little more like that of your Korean enemies, hopefully encouraging the same kind of intense tactical combat.



Crytek makes the claim that it is possible to step off the beaten path and circumvent the majority of enemy forces. While designed as a more linear experience, the jungle surroundings may conceal one or two surprises.

The Last Guy

Nice guys may finish last, but do last guys finish nice?

It may have taken a while to build momentum, but downloadable distribution finally seems to be fulfilling its much heralded purpose. Unlocking developer creativity by limiting risk, *The Last Guy* is one of those small, concept-driven games that would never have survived the offline retail environment – but as it arrives on PSN, foreshadowed by canny viral marketing, *The Last Guy* has already achieved something of a cult status.

Set after the inevitable zombie apocalypse, the player takes on the role of The Last Guy, a single agent of the United Rescue Force, in charge of rescuing as many survivors as possible. This action takes the form of a score-attack game, transposed against satellite imagery – modified for game purposes but including many features and landmarks of real-world locations. Under a time limit, the player roams the streets of Tokyo, London and LA searching for survivors who join a conga line behind you as you make your way to the extraction zone.

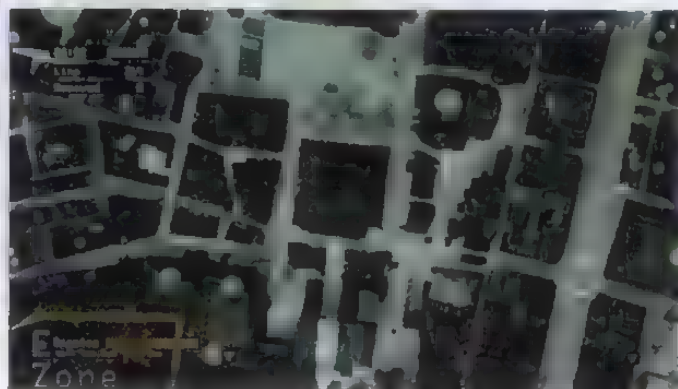
As the queue grows, The Last Guy can perform special actions: circling an entire



VIPs are marked in green on the top-down view, and The Last Guy can use thermal sensors to spot where other people are hiding. However, those sensors won't be much help when trying to avoid the cold, shambling hordes of the undead.

block will provide a bonus, for example, and the queue can also be ordered to gather in a single spot for a short period of time. While survivors are being led to safety, they are vulnerable to attack by the zombies and other monsters who now roam the streets – threatening to dissipate the carefully cultivated queue.

The use of aerial photography as a



backdrop to such a simple arcade-style title may be *The Last Guy's* only real stroke of genius, but there's no doubting that this, in combination with its low price of ¥500 (£2.35) and connect on to online leaderboards, will make it a success. And that will mean that *The Last Guy* is unlikely to be the last outlandish idea to make its way to PSN.



The human zombies are the most common enemy and will rush to The Last Guy when they spot him. Overgrown insects patrol the wider avenues too, along with giant floating eyeballs.

Captain Rainbow

When you wish upon a star, will you use its power for your own ends, or for the greater good?

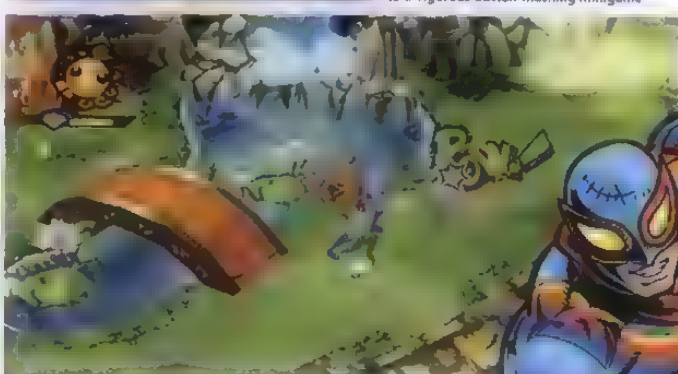
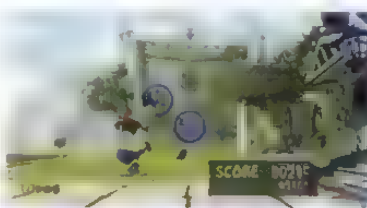
Though Skip's cheerfully offbeat games, such as the Miyamoto-backed *Chibi-Robo*, have yet to turn into substantial commercial successes, they have garnered the company attention and popularity outside of the traditional videogame market in Japan. With Nintendo's support giving the developer access to its back catalogue of characters, it may be that Skip's latest game, *Captain Rainbow*, will tap into the nostalgia of the hardcore gamer too.

Poignantly, however, the characters that *Captain Rainbow* lifts from previous Nintendo titles are purposefully obscure. No Mario or Link here; instead, *Captain Rainbow* features a roster of 8-bit-era bit-part players who are at risk of fading from memory altogether. For this reason they have all sought out the legendary Mimin Island, hoping that its mystical powers will grant them another shot at fame and fortune.

As *Captain Rainbow*, also known as *Nick*, you have your own dreams of heroism to fulfil. By collecting the objects scattered across the island you're able to call down a star, which, once transported to a sacred

place, will fulfil one wish. But things are not quite that easy – the island is populated by shadow creatures who will attempt to steal back the star, and you may be persuaded to fulfil the wishes of the island's washed-up characters instead of your own. But isn't that what true heroism is all about?

As well as being a novel repurposing of Nintendo's numerous aging properties, *Captain Rainbow* promises to be a rather touching game, very much in step with the warmth and heartfelt characterisation of *Chibi-Robo*: if life imitates art, then *Captain Rainbow* may just give some NES-era NPCs a new lease of life.



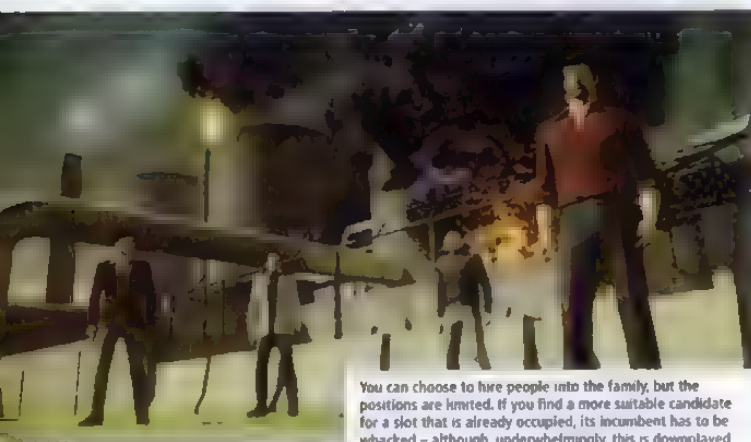
FORMAT: Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: SKIP
ORIGIN: JAPAN
RELEASE: AUGUST 28 (JAPAN),
TBA (UK, US)

The game is divided into two phases – a talky adventure phase, during which Captain Rainbow interacts with the characters on the island, and the action phase in which he fights to protect his stars from the shadows – somewhat reminiscent of foes in *Heart of Darkness* or *Ico*. Though you can fight or avoid them, if captured you are subjected to a vigorous button mashing minigame.

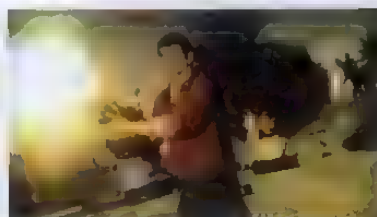
FORMAT 360, PC, PS3
PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER IN HOUSE
ORIGIN US
RELEASE 2009

The Godfather II

The Don gets strategic in a sequel that we hope is more than strictly business



You can choose to hire people into the family, but the positions are limited. If you find a more suitable candidate for a slot that is already occupied, its incumbent has to be whacked – although, underwhelmingly, this is downplayed



The game takes place during the events of The Godfather Part II, shortly after the Cuban revolution, and sees you travel between New York, Miami and Cuba as you take care of Corleone family business while Michael lays low



Hush Job

After committing a crime, a dial on the HUD displays how long you have until the police arrive. During this time it might be a good idea to convince witnesses to keep their mouths shut so that when the cops do turn up they aren't sure who to arrest. Aside from killing bystanders, you have the possibility of bribery and intimidation – although you'll have to be careful not to rough them up too much or they may choose to fight to the death, giving you yet another crime to conceal.

The presentation begins with developers assuring us at some length of the previous game's financial success – it seems of little importance next to what we remember, a game that fell far short of matching its potential, juggling various systems but fumbling their interaction with each other, ineptly handling both the staples of gunplay and driving on which the game placed too much emphasis

To what extent are these failings addressed in this most inevitable of sequels? There's still a disparity in graphical quality compared to its open-world contemporaries, still an over-abundance of explosive action for a licence that demands little of it, and still the awkward insertion of EA's own storyline into the comprehensive existing fiction

However, there are new ideas which could potentially lift it from the assembly line of doughy, malformed GTA replicas and stamp upon it a unique identity. A strategy element now organises the player's progress – there's a complex arrangement of business interests and rackets that the player must

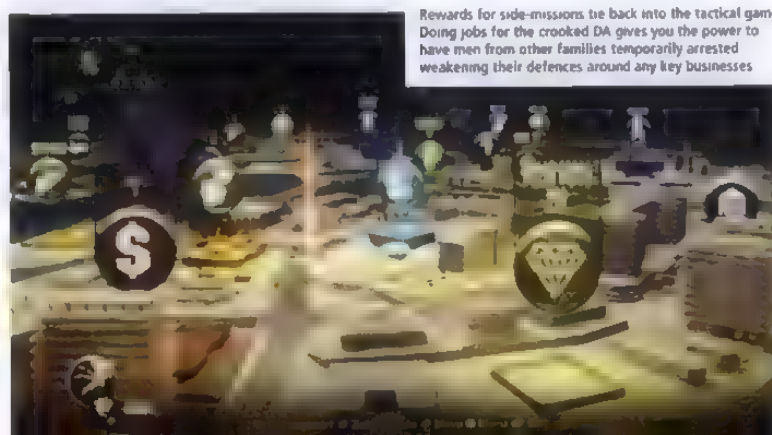
take over and run, arranging sabotage, intimidation and assassination missions from an abstracted map screen, while hiring, training and occasionally whacking family members. You no longer have to be directly involved at all times, instead electing to leave the dirty work to your goons

Monopolising all rackets of a similar kind offers a significant perk – take over all the gun-running businesses, for example, and your men get body armour. The opposing A can play the strategy game, too. Take three out of four businesses, and you'll get heat from all the opposing families, hoping to prevent you establishing a monopoly

There's still a trace of the clunkiness

between individual systems – and between licence and game – that marred its predecessor's ambition. Losing a monopoly will see its perk instantly vanish: body armour will vaporise, leaving you significantly weakened, even if you're in the middle of a firefight. Whacking a problematic underling simply entails checking a box which makes them susceptible to friendly fire – wouldn't it be more in the spirit of The Godfather to be able to drive an insubordinate family member out to a quiet bridge and throw them off concrete boots in place? Combat, too, looks fluid, but the flurry of devastating blows that pre-empt snapping a man's arm or tossing him through some plate glass seems to be more Bourne than Backhand. It's perhaps a little jarring against the real-life fiction – didn't Captain McCluskey break Michael Corleone's jaw with a single inglorious blow?

To EA's credit, though the sociopathic thuggishness of the GTA model will always be an uneasy fit for The Godfather, the sequel does attempt to redress this disconnect. If its employment of strategy can make the player feel like a Don in control of a crime empire, rather than a one-man army, then EA stands a chance of finally treating The Family with the respect it deserves.



Rewards for side-missions tie back into the tactical game. Doing jobs for the crooked DA gives you the power to have men from other families temporarily arrested, weakening their defences around any key businesses



IT'S HERE

GO!VIEW

Get closer to all your favourite TV, Sports & Movies on your PSP games console

Get your **one month free** trial now at www.goview.tv

Simply Sign up, Download, Transfer and Watch

GO!VIEW
powered by sky

FORMAT PC
PUBLISHER INTROVERSION SOFTWARE
DEVELOPER IN HOUSE
ORIGIN UK
RELEASE SEPTEMBER 19

Multiwinia: Survival Of The Flattest

With the virus gone, it's civil war among the single-polygon people of Darwinia



Introversion Software has always worn its geek credentials proudly on its sleeve, and *Multiwinia* is no different, with its celebration of retro virtualisation. We expect that the appearance of *Portal's* Companion Cube won't be the only reference to geek culture.

Until *pink* may have come first, but *Darwinia* was the game that launched Introversion's critical reputation. A digital Eden gone to hell with you in charge of the clean up, marshalling thousands of pixelated souls to combat a virus. *Multiwinia* is the multiplayer version of 2005's god-game-cum-RTS, with Introversion taking a break from the series to put out the more financially successful *Deacon*.

As in the previous game, your basic units are Darwinians – two-dimensional stickmen of just 14 blocks who can be sent in swarms to capture goals and destroy enemies. With Darwinians being instantly recycled back to your spawn point upon death, supremacy in battle becomes a matter of moderating flow from spawn to objective, ensuring that your forces arrive in large enough numbers to overwhelm your foe. Although, in a nod to *Worms*, you can upgrade them by collecting weapons from crate drops: the basic rule of combat is that numbers win out. There are no cover systems or special troops here; as an RTS, *Multiwinia* is as minimalist as its visual design, encouraging you to see the



As well as upgrading your Darwinians' weaponry, crate drops also offer up gun emplacements, APCs for quicker transport, and missile strikes. Although of little benefit, you can personally take control of mounted weaponry

battlefield as an abstracted whole rather than micromanaging.

The six game modes introduce variety. Rocket Riots' multi-stage objective, to fuel and man a space rocket, ensures there are many ways to scupper opponents' plans. Assault puts one player in a heavily defended position as others attack in the hope of defusing a bomb. Even so, the nuts and bolts of each battle remain the same and as with *Darwinia*, the question is whether or not the minimalism of the game can keep players enthralled.

Gridrunner+++

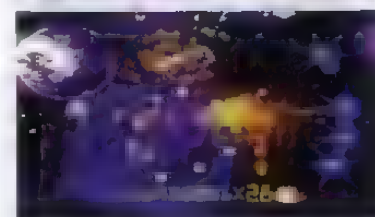
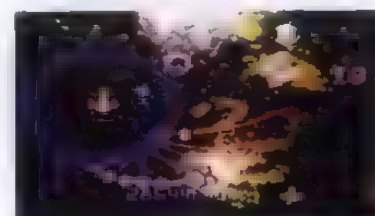
Llamasoft is back, and this time it has its sights on the twin-stick shooter scene

Gridrunner+++ has a distinct visual style that will see many hastily made judgements and comparisons to the much-maligned *Space Giraffe*. They're inevitable and a great pity, because *GR+++* is actually a discrete new undertaking from

Jeff Minter. And it introduces something to the twin-stick shooter that analog controls seem to have been waiting for: velocity. As well as the direction of your ship, their paths and speed can be manipulated through careful pressure, and the core of the shooting action is built around this new ability.

The most obvious manifestation is in the black hole present in every level: an area of the screen that features its own gravity and cones into play more obviously as the level progresses. Carefully bending your bullets around it will, when they reach critical mass, cause it to explode in a burst of hyper-scoring. That's right – what else could *Gridrunner+++* be about but the satisfaction of a great big fat scoring multiplier? Picking up sheep adds further to this, and at the end of each level a quick tot-up sends your score into the stratosphere.

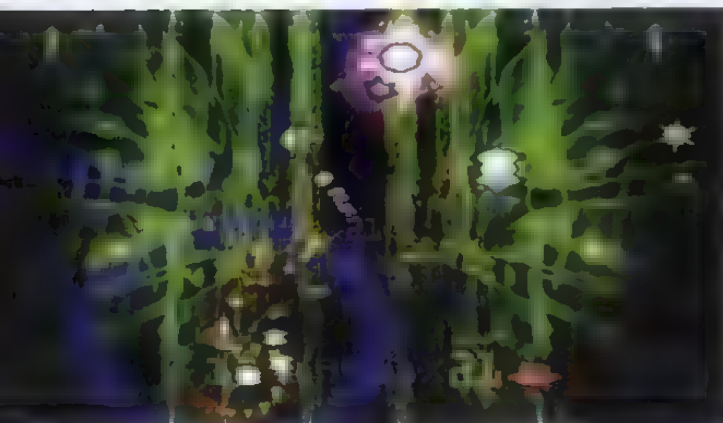
Starting slowly, the game soon begins to pick up and enemies fill the screen from every direction, while the background lasers familiar to any *Gridrunner* fan make their return. The usual snakes, suit designs and segmented enemies are found in updated



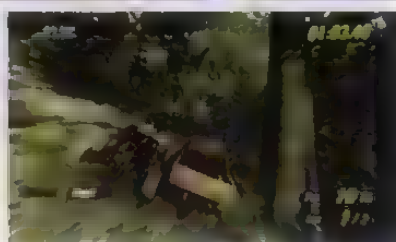
If the screenshots look a little chaotic, that's because the game is. There's little concern about clarity, however, since each new build of the game manages to eke out an increasing visual crispness. Let's hope Llamasoft has the time to tidy up a few snaggy bits before release.

form, but a new highlight in the enemy design are the appropriately named 'wanchors' which send out a line that attaches to your ship and holds it in place.

It's fast, and will require great devotion to master – especially on the hardest of the four difficulty levels: Phaa, which is hellish – but most importantly of all, even at this stage, it's simply exhilarating fun.



The Achievements will be as diabolically pleasing as *Space Giraffe's*. Completing the game on easy mode without directing your shots (you'll have to use the black hole's pull to aim) looks like a particular killer.



MotorStorm Pacific Rift

Perhaps it's because of all those thundering tyres that this tropical island isn't such a paradise

While the dynamic essence of almost all videogames is lost when frozen into a single screenshot, *MotorStorm* is different. Its rough-and-tumble approach to racing means that pain saving can turn into a mass of cartwheeling wreckage in an instant, a moment of drama that's over before the player is aware of it. And it's only in *Pacific Rift*'s screenshots that its graphical detail becomes apparent: the shadowing that's applied to each vehicle as they pass under jungle canopies, the shine of the tropical sun on a fender, the way plants part as your tyres power through them.

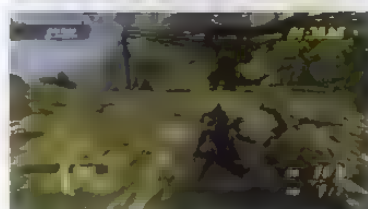
In realtime, however, what you tend to see is more bland: wide raceways bordered by frustratingly sparse vegetation and nondescript mud, grass and stone textures, all with a layer of motion blur smeared over the top. The Pacific island setting is partly to blame. Though it offers the promise of lush vegetation and sparkling waterfalls, the reality in Cascade Falls and Raingod Spire,

the two tracks featured in the 70-per-cent complete build we've played, is of many sections being thrown into dull shadow. Periods when the course stretches before you against a sunny skyline of steep mountainsides are less frequent than you might hope. Water effects are also muted and thinly rendered, so that a monster truck's tyres hitting a river hardly raise a splash.

The trade off, however, is the rich variety of routes and crossovers – some of which are airborne – instant restarts and the density of competitors' vehicles, which continually spar with you and each other. As just as lively as it was in the original, with competitors, whether in partial error or virtual victory, frequently causing metal carcasses to fly your way and jeopardise your progress. The courses also abound with subtle touches, such as small ramps irregularly placed just before a body of water that will ensure a bike jumps clear over it, thereby avoiding being slowed down or swamped, but also



Having previously suggested that implementing splitscreen would be 'a performance nightmare', Evolution has somehow lent *Pacific Rift* a surprisingly detailed four-player splitscreen mode



Motorbike and ATV riders still have the ability to strike out left and right using R1 and L1, a manoeuvre that's tricky to pull off but incredibly satisfying as the ragdoll body of a competing driver is sent flying from its steed

prevent larger vehicles from being able to use the water to cool down their boost gauges.

On paper, it looked as if *Pacific Rift*'s new entrant, the monster truck, would hopelessly overpower the existing roster, being both fast and heavy. But though it'll happily crunch over almost all opposition and rule on the straights, it's a beast to get around corners with a wide turning circle and a propensity to roll on uneven ground. It's also surprisingly fragile, easily taken out by merely clipping a tree. The loading screens describe it as uncompromising, and it is. Early information about the game also suggested that motorbikes would have a hard time, severely impeded by heavy vegetation and water, but they're just as quick and agile as ever, and actually prove easier to get to grips with, taking knocks that would have sent the riders flying in the original game.

And all the vehicles seem a little easier to drive, other than the less-familiar monster truck. Though the handling seems to communicate the terrain just a little less precisely than it did in the original. Overall, this means that *Pacific Rift* will prove a more accessible experience, but beyond this it's hard to discern whether Evolution has changed anything else about the basic racing. And if the sands can be spruced up a little more in its remaining time in development, that's no bad thing.

Competitors tend to be strung out more widely towards the end of a race than in the first game, which means that last-minute mistakes don't result in the loss of many places, but also reduces some of the tension

FORMAT PS3
PUBLISHER SCEE
DEVELOPER EVOLUTION STUDIOS
ORIGIN UK
RELEASE OCTOBER
PREVIOUSLY IN £190



Though we've seen Cascade Falls' jungle, which features rivers, mud and pockets of heavy vegetation, and Raingod Spire's mountain, which has large jumps and inclined turns, the final game will offer another two types of environment – beaches and rivers (which will test motorbike riders in particular since bikes are slowed by water) and volcanic areas with lava flows and uneven rocks. If nothing else, the courses will be more distinctive than those in the original.

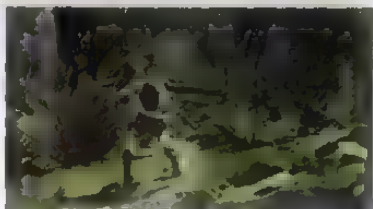
FORMAT 360, DS, PC, PS2, PS3, Wii
PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
ORIGIN US
RELEASE [REDACTED]
PREVIOUSLY IN E186

Tomb Raider: Underworld

She may have blown up her own house, but as *Underworld* emerges, Lara Croft's in no danger of rewriting her rulebook

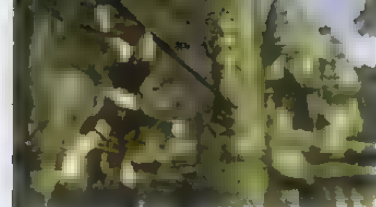


There's a tranquilliser gun this time around to placate animal lovers who may be bothered by the way Croft traditionally blasts her way through wildlife. The grappling hook can now bend around corners and be used to abseil



Eidos adventure is no stranger to puzzles, but *Underworld's* teaser trailer, with its snapshot of Croft's Manor in flames, poses a particularly tricky conundrum: how much do you really want *Tomb Raider* to change? It's an issue Crystal Dynamics has clearly been struggling with since this hardware generation tends to demand innovation alongside prettier foliage. But Croft's is an enduring, narrow remit and she's at her best when she's running, jumping and, occasionally, shooting her way through a succession of ancient structures. Refinement's fine, but sweeping changes have proved treacherous before. Ultimately, the developer has opted to tweak rather than tamper, and the recent unveiling of the Thai and levees showcases gentle additions designed to enhance the existing gameplay without turning it into something else.

The most obvious improvement is that Croft can now shoot while clinging to a ledge or scaling a wall, a move that should break down the previous title's rigid barriers between platforming and gunplay. Equally, environments are now more open-ended and



Keeley Hawes returns as the voice of Lara Croft, her performance freeing the heroine from a sound that seemed borrowed from an uncompromising psychiatric nurse reading a patient for a lobotomy, and turning her into Mary Poppins' sexier younger sister.

dynamic, there are multiple routes through most sections, far more agile enemies and vegetation that moves as Croft pushes past it, though it's rather rubbery and geometric, and can give the impression that the famous explorer is wading through the plastic plants in McDonalds.

Elsewhere, Thailand is fairly traditional adventuring territory, with artfully derelict temples and large, multi-key puzzles suggesting that, if anything, Crystal Dynamics might be moving away from the bite-sized levels that made *Legend* so forward-thinking, and back towards the marathon slogs of the earlier games.

Stubbornly single-layer, it's hard to shake the feeling that *Tomb Raider* is no longer fashionable. Yet, from the languidly revealed vistas to the way it allows you to enjoy your exploration in peace and quiet, there's a timelessness to the series that resists unnecessary change. A new instalment may not be the event it once was, but even a brief glimpse confirms there's still something very tempting about another trip into this vast, lonely and mechanical world.



Pure

Black Rock lends offroad racing a bit of SSX appeal

With its theatrical stunts and blend of heart-stopping vertigo and bumps and heart-quickenng snaking hillside incaners, *Pure's* heritage is rooted more in the swaggering excesses of *SSX* than the physical sparring of *MotorStorm*. But the game, to be released around the same time as *Pacific Rift*, nevertheless runs the risk of being lost in its muddy trail, even though it's prettier (albeit less ambitious) and more accessible (though it still presents a strong challenge of its own).

The issue of course is that it's also about up-close offroad racing. And considering only *Pure's* relatively floaty handling and the negligible difference made by various surface types, it comes up light in comparison. That, however, is ignoring its trick system, which combines the need to 'preload' that is, push forward on the stick and pull back just as you reach the lip of a jump, to gain more air, and holding a face button while pushing a direction on the stick to perform a range of stunts. Successful execution is awarded with boost power, though you'll come off your quad if you resist tricking on landing, a



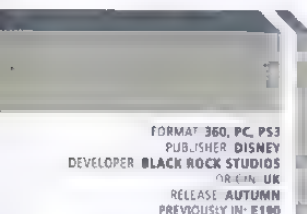
Whether you favour speed or tricking ability, *Pure's* bike editing mode means that it's easy to tailor a ride to your precise needs by choosing from a wide range of components that will slowly unlock over time.

penalty that's mitigated by forgoing resets that ensure you'll lose only a few places.

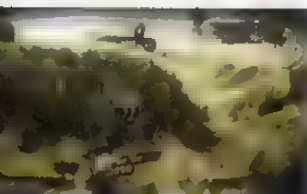
Two sets of higher-grade tricks are present: the boost meter, half- or three-quarter-filled, though it's a confusing design for the game's two race modes – Race and Sprint – the latter taking place on extremely short courses – because it actively discourages expending boost. After all, it takes time to refill the meter with low-grade tricks. The system comes into its own in the Freestyle option, a race-cum-stunt

mode where the aim is to win points before you run out of fuel.

Either way, the secrets to learn each hump on the real-world-inspired (from Lake Como to New Mexico) but dramatically arcadey courses, which are rich with crossovers and alternate routes, to know exactly from where to squeeze air and trick time. And though the handling is a little indistinct, it's enjoyably knockabout enough to make that process one to look forward to exploring in more detail.



FORMAT 360, PC, PS3
PUBLISHER DISNEY
DEVELOPER BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
ORIGIN UK
RELEASE AUTUMN
PREVIOUSLY IN: E190



Pure's tracks feature various physics-enabled objects lying around that will be sent flying if you crash into them, but they rarely affect the racing itself. Similarly, any collisions with other racers rarely result in a tumble.

Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars

The question, of course, is: will it bolete us over, or will it turn out to be a pile of shiitake?

While B-movie horror tradition dictates that alien meteorites are the leading cause of reanimated corpses in small-town America, *Mushroom Men* posits that equally alarming things occur below the human scale. It's as if Ed Wood had somehow negotiated a limitless budget to adapt *The Borrowers*: extraterrestrial gloomp brings mushrooms, plants and all manner of creepy crawlies to greater levels of sentience. Naturally, the result is bitter warfare, waged at ankle height, between different species of fungus.

As Pax, a mushroom of the bolete family, you must find your way through such cavernous and hazardous environments as sheds, gardens and chimneys on a quest to safeguard your tribe from the attacks of the evil Amanitas and Lepiota. From what we've played so far, these settings aren't just scenic dressing for a well prescribed obstacle course but large platforming playgrounds that you're encouraged to exhaustively explore.

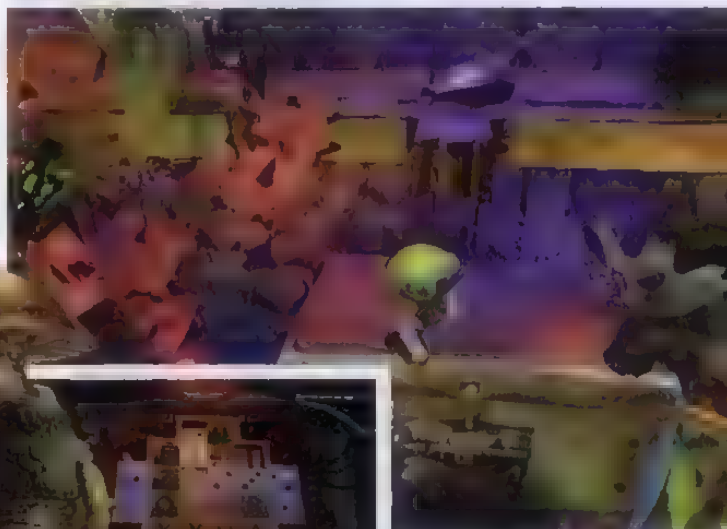
Objectives are dotted throughout. One level sees you search the environment for heavy and precariously balanced objects, with

which to kill the goop-infected rabbits below; another requires you to prove your prowess in combat through a succession of battles against the ninja-like shiitake mushrooms, another still sees you puzzle out activating the Morel kingdom's arcane defence mechanisms in order to break a siege by a rival tribe.

The actual completion of these tasks is of minimal interest and the game lacks Mario's precise controls. Nonetheless, plotting a route to your goal holds the kind of pleasure found in *Crackdown*, and explorations well rewarded through upgrades and secrets. However, with a combat system that amounts to Remote Warggling, and most other abilities moved to context, the game will have to hope its world is sufficiently crammed with delights and its platforming challenge persistently engaging to coax players away from Galaxy's zed diversions and down to the garden shed.



Combat is given marginally more depth by a hugely simplistic weapon crafting system. It's very rigid in what can be created, but does serve to provide incentives for searching the levels for components.



The soundtrack, which is partly contributed by musician Les Claypool of the band Primus, builds up as you complete the level's goals, weaving in new ambient noises and sound loops that create a pulsating, syncopated rhythm to which the entire world moves.

Tornado

Lots of rubbish that needs rolling up to save the planet? Go get 'em, Katama... sorry... Tornado!

Nothing necessarily wrong with that – there's hardly an abundance of roller-coasters around. You'd think, though, that given such a well-known model there would at least have been a handful of lessons learned. Unfortunately *Tornado* takes the few faults that existed in *Katamari*, and adds some more.



The tutorial is rather unwieldy, taking a good five or six minutes to explain what's really a fairly basic control scheme. Curiously, there's an option on the main screen to specifically select it, but beginning a new game will force you to endure it anyway.

The most obtrusive of these (literally) is the HUD. The touchscreen is used to control your tornado, which is whipped up with circular motions and then directed using the same. It's a small enough area at the best of times, and ever smaller when you're constantly drawing shapes on it, why the dev team has chosen to clutter it with up to five icons, some extremely large (providing most is superfluous information – especially when the upper screen features only a basic map of the level) is a mystery worthy of the King of All Cosmos.

If that can be ignored, then *Tornado* is a competent enough execution of the basics, though the tight time limits preclude any real sandbox fun in its over, at least has its own visual identity with quirky animals and boxy landscape features giving it a little distinctive charm, while the extra abilities that different levels of tornado and the option to trade between characters brings are welcome, if you're desperate for some DS rolling this will be the only reason, because Bandai Namco has yet to get around to doing it more authentically.



FORMAT DS
PUBLISHER IGNITION
DEVELOPER SUCCESS
ORIGIN JAPAN
RELEASE SEPTEMBER 30

The tornado has five levels of strength, upgraded through picking up lots of trash.

War is coming



GOA

www.war-europe.com

MYTHIC



WARHAMMER ONLINE

AGE OF RECKONING

© 2008 Games Workshop Limited. All Rights Reserved. Games Workshop, Warhammer, Warhammer Online, Age of Reckoning, and all associated marks, names, signs, race insignia, characters, vehicles, locations, units, illustrations and images from the Warhammer world are either ©, ™ and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2008. Used under license by Electronic Arts Inc. All Rights Reserved. Mythic Entertainment is a trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. In the U.S. and/or other countries. GOA and the GOA logo are trademarks of France Telecom. Publishing, hosting and community management by GOA. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Atmospheric cond

There is a school of thought which suggests that, if they are to move forward and become taken more seriously as an entertainment medium, videogames need to have more recognisable creatives, that the people responsible for making them need to raise their profiles. We need more Miyamotos and Molyneuxs and Bleszinskis, goes the theory, to provide better parity with the Spielbergs and Lucases and Camerons of Hollywood, and then the wider world will begin to gain a finer appreciation of what the medium represents. As a man who has gone so far as to put his own likeness into one of his own games, **David Cage**, the writer and director of *Heavy Rain: The*

itions

Quantic Dream's dream project is finally turning from cinematic tech demo to PlayStation 3 reality

Origami Killer, would probably appreciate the sentiment. Cage isn't unique for having his own visage pop up in-game (who doesn't remember shooting Dr. Doak in *GoldenEye*, for example, a character modelled on David Doak, who worked on the game during his time at Rare?), but the head of French studio Quantic Dream took it a step further than most by putting himself right at the front and centre of the stage for just over a minute of screen time at the beginning of the demo version of his company's last production, the PC and console adventure game *Fahrenheit* (aka *Indigo Prophecy*). It was, in some respects, Cage's own Hitchcock moment, giving him the opportunity to talk to

camera and directly address the audience, temporarily breaking the game's spell and reminding you that there is a human being behind it all, pulling the strings. During this sequence, Cage imparts nothing to the player that could not be communicated via other, more traditional videogame means, but it is partly for this reason that it makes such a curious impact. Some call Cage an egotist for doing such a thing. Others celebrated this bold attempt at playing around with the fourth wall, where it wasn't a game character messing with convention (Sonic had been impatiently tapping his foot in recognition of an untouched controller since 1991, after all

and Sega's hedgehog wasn't the first to do such a thing) but a member of the game's actual production staff. Cage's fascination with narrative forms, it turns out, is more like an obsession, and with PlayStation 3 exclusive *Heavy Rain* he and his Paris-based team are attempting to rewrite some of the rules of the graphic adventure game in bid to bring it back to life for a modern audience.

Listening to Cage present *Heavy Rain* while one of his colleagues demos it via a PS3's Sixaxis, it quickly becomes clear that this is intended to be an experience for grown-ups, rendered in tones that range all the way across the spectrum

from dark to sinister. "I would define *Heavy Rain* as an adult emotional thriller," he explains. "It's a story-driven experience. It's told not through cutscenes but directly through the character's actions; you don't watch the story, you actually play it." As an adventure game, *Heavy Rain* offers more physical involvement than any example that has gone before (of which, more later), and, more obviously, a level of graphical realism that hasn't previously been seen in a realtime console game environment. Crucially, Quantic Dream's refinements aren't focused on making a rock face appear more believably craggy or a car bonnet's sheen seem more



facial details, animated with scary precision



you can open every cupboard and door, and apparently full plumbing systems even exist

(see 'Showreal'). It's unlikely that Cage will make a cameo appearance in *Heavy Rain*, but thanks to the technology on display here, if he did so it would be in a manner that might give members of his family the shivers.

Today's demo is something that has been created specifically for the purpose of showing off the game's visual style and mechanics, and Cage tells us that its storyline has nothing to do with what will appear in the finished game, but it is an elaborate production nevertheless. The lead character,

so, when you want to turn, you don't make the legs turn, you make the head turn first.

The way in which Madison moves around the environment immediately looks unusual, even despite Cage having explained how it works. We are accustomed to controlling thirdperson-viewed characters with heads that remain fixed forward and in line with the direction of their torsos, their precise positioning changing only in relation to body movements. *Heavy Rain*'s system is like taking a thirdperson view into the world of a character that is being controlled with mouse/look.

We worked very hard on motion capture, especially facial motion capture," explains Cage. "As you know, eyes are incredibly hard to do: the minute movements they constantly make mean you can tell whether something is human or not. We created a technology to motion-capture that from actors.

The shaders applied to the lead character's eyes and the skin that surrounds them also conspire to nudge *Heavy Rain*'s characters closer to believability. The

digital mannequins has been meticulously applied away, and is presented with Madison, a character whose facial features, though attractive in an expected

Eyes are incredibly hard to do: the minute movements they make mean you can tell whether something is human or not

unnatural sort of way, also carry blemishes that succeed in breaking down her artificiality. Ultimately it feels like a significant step forward for game character realisation, and it's fascinating to finally see in a game context the sort of work Quantic Dream previously explored in its 2006

Madison, a journalist, visits the house of a man suspected of killing several women. Her intention is to have a snoop around, take some photos, and then write up the scoop. As she arrives, Cage explains the game's unique control scheme: "We want the game to be accessible, so we changed many conventions. The way to move forward is not done using a stick. It's done using a trigger. Why? When the camera cuts [in other games], it changes your reference and you can become lost. Here, like in a racing game, the trigger is always moving forward – and it's analogue so you can decide if you want to move fast or not. The second innovation is on the left analogue stick, which is used to control the head of the character.

We didn't want the camera system to be stuck on the back of the character – we wanted a real sense of direction," says Cage.

The team's innovative control system is illustrated further when Madison approaches a dustbin, at which point the game's MPAR (Motion Physical Action Reaction) system comes into play, bringing up information in the lower-right section of the screen that tells you how to interact with the object you have encountered. In this instance the illustration shows how you must move the Sixaxis's right analogue stick in order to raise the dustbin lid and look inside. This is not merely a case of stabbing a button and seeing the appropriate action played out: the analogue nature of the interface means that

SHOWREAL

If you somehow haven't yet seen Quantic Dream's 'The Casting', take a look at it now (it's easily locatable on the internet). "What kept people interested was the fact that she went through different emotions: from a smile to tears to anger," explains Cage of the demo's popularity. "It really convinced us after the success of this demo that people wanted something different [in a game]."



Cage: "The game will include 80 scenes like this, each one different. They form a very dark thriller full of twists and surprises: like a movie, you never know what comes next."

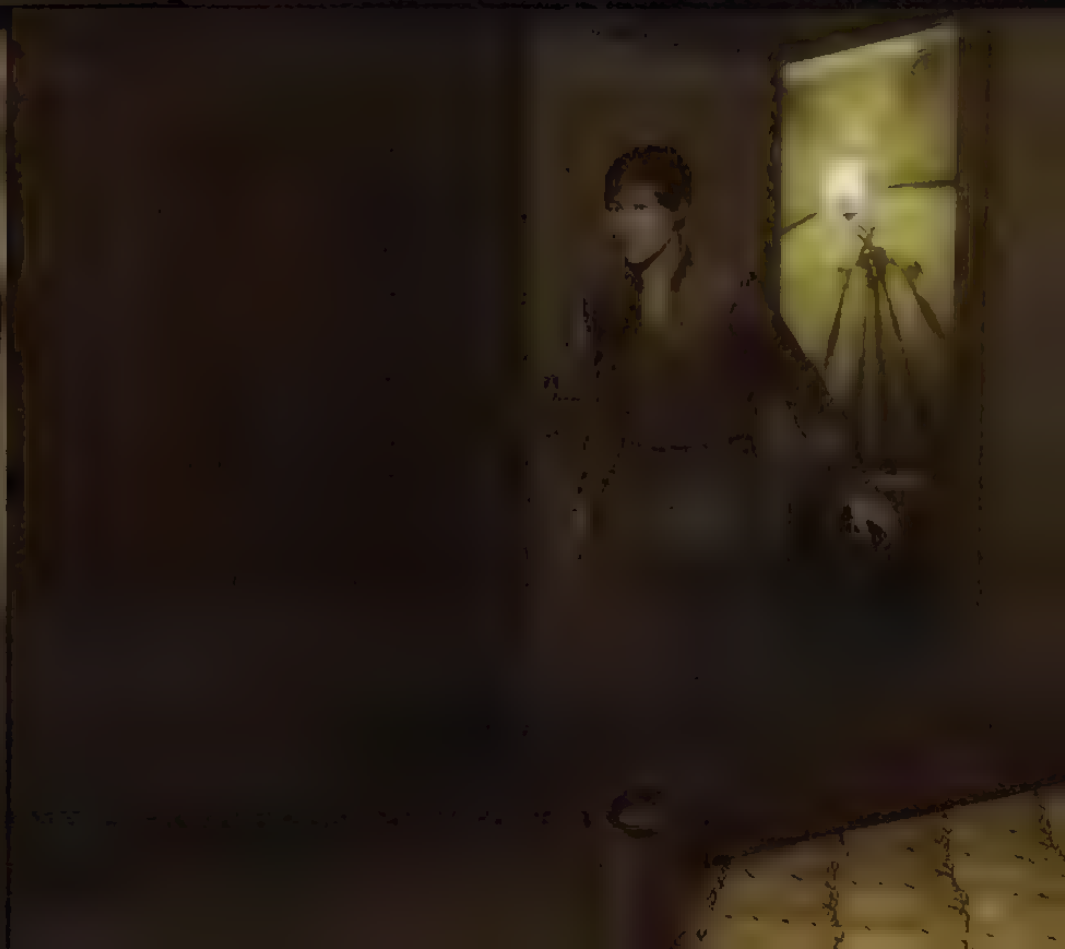
Henderson meets the undertaker's apocalyptic friends. "You don't have a gun, a car, solve puzzles or deal with inventories," says Cage. "You deal with the story in a physical sense."



you can wind the animation out, as quickly or as slowly as you wish, and indeed wind it back in again—raising the lid, then lowering it. The interaction with the game's environment feels much more organic than anything we've seen since EA's bold but ultimately unsatisfactory *Trespasser*, but in this specific context it doesn't add up to anything very exciting. No doubt such subtlety of control will be explored in the game proper.

Subtlety is absent from what happens next. Looking into the trash, you see a woman's shoe. A woman's shoe casually tossed into the dustbin outside of the house of a single man suspected of murdering women. If only real-life investigations were this easy.

Suitably braced, Madison approaches the front door of the house, at which point the MPAR begins to reveal more of the game's depth, throwing up two possible options: do you want to press the doorbell or knock? Then the dialogue system comes into play, allowing you to choose what to say by tipping the Sixaxis towards the desired option.



Heavy Rain uses splitscreen presentation in order to heighten tension: in this case you're able to keep an eye on encroaching danger as you attempt to work out what to do next.

"Hello?" says Madison. No response. The MPAR offers up the opportunity to look through the keyhole or take a peek through the grubby windows. Madison does both, glimpsing a dark living room full of clutter. No one appears to be home, so she tries the garage door. Locked. She walks around to the side of the house.

The kitchen window looks inviting, but it's out of Madison's reach. In this instance, Sixaxis input is used more crudely, a quick forward motion with the controller is used to kick a barrel into a position where it can be used as a stepping stone. "Here's another feature," says Cage. "If we pull one specific trigger it shows you what your character is thinking – the thought system." Madison is thinking that breaking into a suspected murderer's house may be a bad idea, but she proceeds anyway.

More Sixaxis motion is used to raise the window in order to clamber inside. A trigger press and more thoughts from the heroine: "Oh, what's that smell? Must be coming from the stuffed animals." The suspect, it turns out, is a taxidermist: stuffed animals sit around the grimy living room. But what is this in the fireplace? A scrap of woman's clothing, perhaps the remains of something that was hastily burned? Could it be, possibly, maybe, another clue?

Upstairs, we find anyone who's ever watched CSI on

engine pulling up outside. Then *Heavy Rain* begins to shake off some of its predictability and becomes more interesting again. The screen splits into two and in one section we are given a view of Madison while in the other we see the taxidermist arriving home.

"We'd better move slowly because we don't want to make any noise or he might hear her, and we're in trouble," says Cage. A gentle press of the Sixaxis trigger moves Madison slowly. We hear her thoughts again: "Gotta survive. I'm not gonna die. I'll find a solution. I always find solutions."

We see the murderer more clearly now, the camera switching to a view of him sitting in an armchair, turning on the television. At the same time, Madison's careful progress downstairs is also visible. Out of the murderer's sight she goes, into the garage and out through its door. There is no direct engagement between the two characters onscreen throughout the entire sequence, but the framing of the action succeeds in building a triumphant level of intensity – even when Madison reaches her motorcycle and, desperate to get as far away from this place as possible, finds that its engine will not start. We somehow resist the urge to groan as Cage attempts to heighten the tension: "Hurry, Madison, you need to leave! Of course, the damn engine never starts."



somewhere to hide as she watches the murderer approach her position. "There are different hideouts in the house – 20 or 30 different places," explains Cage. To further build the tension, the MPAR dictates that hiding is accomplished by pressing a diverse

segue from one character's death to another one picking up the story, but he assures us that his team has it all worked out.

"Maybe losing her will offer you more possibilities which you would have otherwise missed," he smiles.

But to reiterate: the particular scenario we've seen today has no bearing on *Heavy Rain*'s actual story content, which Cage describes as being like a 'rubber band'. "The players, through their actions, can stretch it or contract it," he says. "What is interesting is that you can't change the backbone of the story, but the way it's told is entirely up to the player. So they define their story through invisible boundaries we set, and they see it evolve accordingly and see consequences of their actions."

We leave the demo pondering one of the most unusual, and unusually beautiful, games we've seen for a long while. It is heartening, certainly, to see a big-budget production that is so wilfully operating outside of the FPS/driving game comfort zone. If the entire production ends up being as polished as its graphics, David Cage's name may yet play a part in gaming's push for broader recognition.

"What is interesting is that you can't change the backbone of the story, but the way it's told is entirely up to the player"

similar should be expecting but which Cage seems convinced will shake us to our very core: a dead woman lying in the bath, the victim's blood spattered all around. The next room delivers something more chilling, but not without the distinct air of Channel 5 about it: turns out this taxidermist fellow likes to stuff women as well as animals. He has quite the collection here, posed around the room, sitting and standing, each one positioned to serve a part in some kind of demented roleplay.

"He's stuffed them. Looks like I finally got my story," says Madison. "Let's take a picture and get out of here quickly," urges Cage theatrically, "because at any time the guy may come back, and we'll be in a difficult situation. Uh-oh..."

"OK, that was one possible story," concludes Cage. "The guy came back, we managed to leave the house quickly – we'll go to the police and tell them what we know. The scenario will take the information and continue to tell the story based on what we've done. If *Heavy Rain* was just that, it would already be fantastic, but it is much more... Now we'll show you another option, a variation."

The sequence is replayed, but this time Madison steps on a squeaky floorboard as she attempts to escape. "Come on, visitor, show your face," says the taxidermist, having been alerted to your presence. "I'm not going to eat you. Ha ha!" Again, the splitscreen motif comes into play, but this time Madison must find

selection of the Sixaxis's buttons and triggers simultaneously, which clearly puts a strain on the player's hands. But the manoeuvre is pulled off here, and Madison eludes her pursuer, only to mess up and end up facing him regardless, at which point further MPAR actions define a scuffle and then a scrambled escape from the house.

Cage outlines other ways in which the scenario could have played out. "You could kill him. You could hide and call the police – they'll arrive and save you, if you survive. Or Madison could get killed. And this is an interesting because if she dies one of the controllable characters has died. Cage isn't saying how many playable characters are involved in the game, or indeed how it might





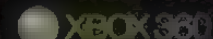
NOTE NOW AT
www.fallout3.com



Prepare for the Future

Fallout 3

PrepareForTheFuture.com



Fallout 3 © 2008 Bethesda Softworks LLC, a subsidiary of ZeniMax Media Inc. Bethesda Softworks, Bethesda Game Studios, and the Fallout logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Bethesda Softworks LLC in the U.S. and/or other countries. All Rights Reserved. Microsoft, Windows, the Windows Vista Start button, Xbox, Xbox 360, and XBLIVE are trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. "PS3", "PLAYSTATION 3", and the PS3 Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Be good for goodness' sake

Be good, be bad, and all that jazz. Tired of moral nonsense intruding on your videogaming? So is Lionhead. That's why you won't believe what *Fable II* will ask of you

Remember when the idea of choice in videogames sounded impossibly liberating? It's been a while since that heady concept really conjured up excitement. A succession of disappointing titles that offered little more than stop-start moments in the midst of the usual mechanics struck the first blow; the adoption of this method of 'choice' in titles as distinct as *Mass Effect* and *Overlord* seemed to set a standard that, for all its competence, never felt anything more than standard; the freedom that *Elite* had hinted could

become videogames' future evolved into little more than binary variants and narrow narratives.

Fable, of course, promised that for every choice there would be a consequence—but ultimately only delivered the same divorced decisions. So you might be forgiven for a little skepticism about *Fable II*. But it's a sunny day, we're in Guldford playing the game, and prepared for anything except what happens next. The game's creative director begins an impression of Eric Cartman: "Will you do *this* good thing and get *this*



prize or will you do this bad thing and get this prize?" **Dene Carter** is of course talking about choices. And he's reaching a fine pitch of indignation. "Because that's what games do to represent morality! Good lord, I'm so glad that things really are that simple and nothing like religions have been built around such concepts." It's by no means a rehearsed response, but you suspect it's something that's been chundering around in the man's head for an unhealthy length of time.

It's clear why. If there's one overriding impression that Lionhead's studio and staff leave you with, it's that they really don't think they did a good enough job on *Fable*. Any trepidation about criticising their baby is swept aside by the team itself quite violently sticking the boot in first. Perhaps the biggest problem came to light recently, apparently, although approximately 30

in one of those moral dilemmas now and now 'I'm not' I hope you just pay it - the idea is for a player to just be dealing with situations without thinking about how they're acting." This is most obvious in the childhood section, which after our playthrough turns out to contain many trivial decisions we didn't realise were being made. It provokes one of those Molyneux moments: "My dream is really to make a game where people can be what they want to be and they don't feel shackled by us as designers - that they have to be this sort of person, or do this in this kind of situation."

To be fair to the original *Fable*, however, it's not as if other games succeeded where it failed. Every game that claims to present a moral quandary or offer a choice suffers from exactly the same disconnect between the main mechanics and the 'choice' moment. It wasn't surprising to find out that the Little Sisters were a late addition to *BioShock*, and the option to spare the odd unfortunate in *GTA IV* trivialised the thousands of others you kill without a second thought. Games have simply never been very good at making you feel responsible for your actions: you could count on one hand those where

forgetting about the idea of morality - any choice feels like it carries a weight of responsibility. Those that do succeed often do it without any explicit prodding. *Shadow Of The Colossus* makes the player feel bad for killing things without an NPC saying, "You're a bad man." The world makes you feel bad: you're an intruder, a murderous little so-and-so who relentlessly assaults enormous, peaceful beasts in their homes.

So how do you bridge this divorce between a game's mechanical interactions and its narrative paths? Carter and Molyneux talk about specific incidents, which we'll avoid for the sake of the experience. But in conceptual terms what you will face in some of *Fable II*'s most crucial moments is a stark truth: goodness isn't rewarded. It might be the right thing to do, but it's often not the sensible thing to do, and your avatar's entire character, both internally and externally, will be affected in a way

per cent of players began the game following an evil path, by the conclusion between 90 and 95 per cent of players were good.

It was simply too easy to slip into being virtuous by default - both a conceptual and design problem - exacerbated by the way *Fable* would essentially stop at certain junctures and present the player with an unsubtle moral choice. "We did an awful lot wrong with *Fable*," admits Carter. "We utterly failed at storytelling: the characterisation and script was poor, and the plotting was mystical, to say the least, though maybe that was in the grand old tradition of JRPGs where you don't know what the hell's going on half the time."

"*Fable* was too hard and fast, too binary," says studio head **Peter Molyneux**. "Kill this or save this or give this, and I wanted to make *Fable II* far more subtle than that. What I hope when you play is you don't think 'Oh, I'm

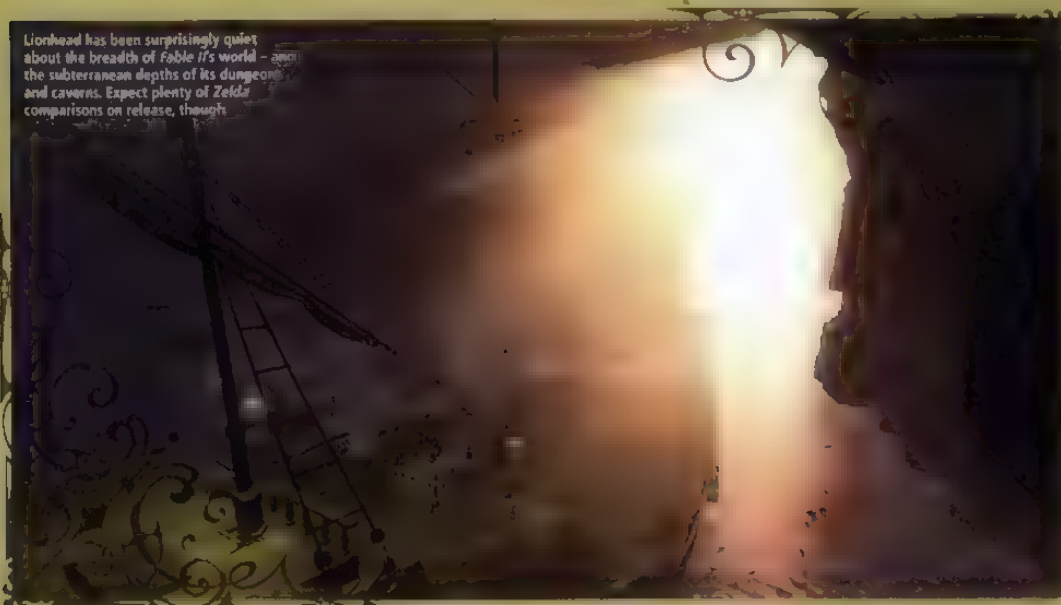
The combat system is probably the most surprising aspect of *Fable II*: foes surround you, and quick combinations flow smoothly. Incidentally, it has never been so obvious that Lionhead employs some of the finest animators in the field.



The opening town contrasts your vagrant character with the glorious tower being built on the outskirts and gives a cold warning about what you wish for.



Lionhead has been surprisingly quiet about the breadth of *Fable II*'s world – and the subterranean depths of its dungeons and caverns. Expect plenty of *Zelda* comparisons on release, though.



that many players will find, at best, disquieting and, at worst, an outrage. And if your choices affect your character's physical wellbeing, strength and abilities – and not in the tired old 'dark path = dark powers' way – will you be content with just the warm glow of having done something right? "The things that begin to happen to you and your final choice," begins **Louise Copley**, *Fable II*'s executive producer, "they're hard, hard things – but that's the path of a hero. Do you want to be one or not?" You can lose almost everything. You can lose your hard-won experience. You can grow old and you can be permanently scarred. You'll be bullied by other characters, and they won't hesitate to mock the type of player you are. It's taken a while to find expression in games, but now being good isn't about wanting to be good and clicking the right option; it's about self-sacrifice. "Now it's hard," says Carter. "So, you're good. What if that stops you doing this? Still good? What if we take this, and this, and this from you? Still good?"

Part of why this is so effective is that, while *Fable II* does offer the big dramatic moments where you'll be aware of acting in a particular way, the vast majority of the game simply consists of situations to which you react without realising they're 'choices'. In short, *Fable II* comes scarily close to building your character based on your behaviour rather than your conscious choices: the game reads responses that you're not aware are being assessed. It loses a tiny piece of its impact by having plus and minus markers appearing above surrounding characters' heads after some events, though this does make you aware of how often your actions are being judged, and there are so many occasions where a little action can make a difference that it quickly fades into the background. At the very beginning of the game, for example, a photographer asks you to pose for a picture to help him drum up some more business. It's easy enough, over in a flash, and off you go. But if you take the opportunity to pull a face just as the shutter closes, you've been a bit naughty.

But, importantly, that's naughty, and not evil: part

of *Fable II*'s fleshing out of the concept is that the personality is now multilayered. This means you can be a fundamentally good character, but an ugly and corrupt one without any charm. And you'll look like it. "I hope you see some heroes that are magnificent and beautiful – but totally and utterly evil," says Carter. "Pure in a kind of Aryan ideal way – they look beautiful but scary and will ultimately destroy the world." Again, however, it's not all about the big things: while trying to demonstrate how expressions work, Molyneux is pulling a heroic pose in front of a lady and some children gather around to watch. After holding it for a while, he messes up his timing, but rather than 'failing', the children fall about laughing at the foolish hero. They don't think he's failed; they think he's funny. Molyneux's temporary clumsiness has put his character on the path to being an entertainer.

"Basically, we've added more scales in there," says Molyneux. "So you can go through and be either pure evil or corrupt evil. There's wealth and poverty which is really interesting in itself because if you've got great wealth then how do you feel about that? And how do people feel about you? There's an enormous number of stats that are being analysed – and there are things like people being corrupt and evil, but poor. And what do you call that? We knew it could, but we just didn't realise that would happen." At this point he shows the morality curves of 50 testers in the first six hours of the game – they vary wildly, but what's noticeable is there's a significant proportion wavering on the evil side. "There's a lot of potential in morality, but again as a designer I just want people to play and not overthink that stuff – I don't want this to be the equivalent of an arthouse film where often the enjoyment comes after you've watched it. That looking and analysing, 'hate that'."

The subtlety of action and response exists throughout: simply run through a town scattering peasants everywhere and they'll think you're rude, hanging around a cash register for a bit too long and



Peter Molyneux, the head of Lionhead Studios, and *Fable II*'s court herald



Louise Copley, the executive producer of *Fable II*'s courtly world



Dene Carter, the creative director of the witty and encyclopaedic court historian



John McCormack, the art director of the bright standard bearer for *Fable II*





The dog's personality is a little simpler than your own, but will reflect the broader strokes of your own choices: this pooch's master is a bad man



they'll get suspicious; disappear behind a wall with someone (such as an irritating bard – "I dislike him a lot," says a terrifyingly calm Molyneux, "and so I'm going to kill him") and return solo, and they'll wonder about what happened and possibly check it out. By default your sword won't injure townspeople ("to avoid accidents") but the 'safety' is easily turned off and you can go loco. At which point the guards quickly arrive, and you can either resist, pay a fine or do community service – "which is a whole other thread of activity you

can go down," says Molyneux, "but if I don't do it in a certain amount of time I'll become a fugitive."

It would be easy to go into detail on how much more advanced the physical morphing of your character is in *Fable II* (apparently, the development team realised it may have made a slight error when all of *Fable's* reviews featured screenshots of more or less identical evil characters). The biggest change, however, is a simple one: you can now choose your hero's gender. "That was the main thing I wanted after *Fable*," says Copley. "We prided ourselves on our morphing hero and you could be this angelic guy or horrible guy, but you're always a man, and I wanted to broaden it." If you were being cynical you might insist this is just a question of

skins, but at its most fundamental level *Fable* is about people reacting to you – or, more specifically, to the character you present to them. In the context of *Fable II's* emphasis on things like marriage, something as simple as a gender change can alter this paradigm completely and in some ways you might not expect. "We won't let you quest while you're pregnant, but we make it very quick – it was one of those debates we had. 'Do we want a labour minigame?'" laughs Copley. "It's about the way you morph, the way you develop yourself, the accessories, the clothes – having the choice to be female is about creating something you want to play the game with. You've got a whole living situation there that will react to you differently and really tailor the experience. It keeps you on the same journey we've carefully crafted, but allows you to really be who you want to be."

That living situation, even in the few short hours we spent with it, is full of little secrets and caves, but what really makes it living is the constant NPC dialogue. It still has more than a dash of ye olde *Fablespeak* about it (how could it not?) but the occasionally grating plummy of the original has been toned down a little and, most importantly, it steers well clear of the pitfalls marked 'forsooth' and 'verily'. "It's incredibly easy to write as if you've got a massive stick up your arse, incredibly easy, and I've seen so many people do that," says Carter. "Especially in fantasy – good god, you can really sound like you've got a boner for yourself in three seconds flat." There's also no repetition during our time in the town, not a single line, and Molyneux is keen to emphasise that the 120,000 lines of dialogue have been



Carter on Tolkien: "He's really dry sometimes and really loves his battles. I love the decades of self-illusion he must have imposed on himself to believe in his world and come up with his language. But at the same time I love the fact he believed in himself and his world so much, even if it means he was utterly bonkers"

recorded for precisely this reason. Will that bear out after days with the game rather than hours, though? "Honestly? I'm sure there might be some you'll hear again in your entire play," says Copley, "but we've balanced the stats so heavily, and we've so much dialogue that it's quite unlikely unless you're hammering the same interaction again and again and again and trying to break it."

While trying to show off a few more specifics of the towns, Molyneux also demonstrates something that few people would expect: it's all running regardless of where you are. Using a debug menu to shoot into the air and scan across the world from a vantage point (and inadvertently demonstrating far more effectively than concept art ever could the stunning range and vision accomplished by the art team) you see villagers going about their business next to a shop; on a path there's a band of rogues sitting round their campfire waiting for an unwary traveller; near the outskirts there are two children running around each other. At this point, the player character is in a different part of *Fable II*'s world in another town; the simulation is running seamlessly. It's not particularly heralded by Molyneux (though he does insist that "this is simply how it has to be"), but more so than anything else shows the ambition and scale of the project, and hints at something more than exaggeration

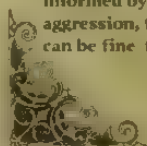
behind Carter's assertion that "it's ten times bigger than we thought it would be."

It's also a world that looks and feels very British, something not common in today's big videogame productions. **John McCormack**, *Fable II*'s art director, recalls that "at Big Blue Box [the company that began *Fable* before being assimilated into Lionhead] we had a place next to a canal and bridge, forests and fields. You couldn't help but be influenced: you just look out and there's a guy going under a bridge in his barge with a forest behind him and a castle away in the back. When you're doing the art, that comes to seem natural and deliberate – because nobody else was touching it." Copley adds: "There's this sense of humour – I was going to say Pythonesque but it's not, it's different – we've always made this series not to be serious about. It's something you have fun with."

McCormack also points out that the look of the game is as much European as British, particularly with regard to its architecture and creatures. It's a fair point. More importantly, despite the fantasy genre being vastly oversubscribed, you can easily identify a piece of artwork as belonging to the *Fable* series. And 'belonging' is a crucial part of identity. "No orcs, no goblins, none of that," begins McCormack. "We try to think more

Down, boy

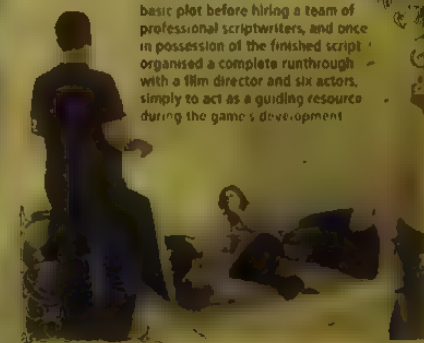
The dog is a singularly curious and intriguing part of the game, not helped by the fact that in this build it's darting around like it's on amphetamines. Perhaps its best trait is never obstructing or bumping into the player, despite the constant proximity, closely followed by a barking curiosity that finds something everywhere: whether walking through forest, marshland or town it'll always sniff interesting things that are out of the way and try to attract the player to its discovery. If that sounds like the most irritating adjunct to a game imaginable (it's not), you'll be pleased to discover that most aspects of its personality can be accentuated or attenuated through some simple training: the dog's personality is cruder than the player's, and although certain traits are directly informed by your own behaviour, such as aggression, the majority of its behaviour can be fine-tuned.



Carter: "We're very influenced by the landscape around us, and my landscape is one of foxes and badgers and mice and voles and not things like wolves and lions and great bears. I've never seen those things in my life – why would I make a game about them?"



For *Fable II*, Lionhead created a basic plot before hiring a team of professional scriptwriters, and once in possession of the finished script organised a complete runthrough with a film director and six actors, simply to act as a guiding resource during the game's development



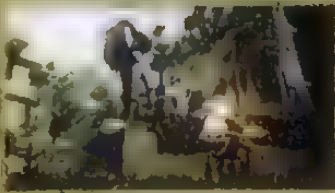
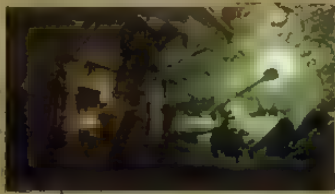


supernatural: let's take the basic idea of being a small nasty creature, why not write a story, like they're really little children that have been possessed and live in caves? Everything has a reason for being the way it is." McCormack's time showing us the game is vastly different from that with the other members of *Fable II*'s team – panning into a foggy graveyard, his glee at the chunky headstones, crumbling brick and specific details that characterise it is obvious. "It's one of those places that, even though it's not central in the story or anything, you know that graveyards are inherently spooky... It's a labour of love for us because we were all so into it." He admits that the art team is 'eccentric' and that's perhaps why the visual style of *Fable* has an edge to it: "We are geeks, and we play the fantasy

it goes to the root of why people unquestioningly accept 'standards' when it comes to the genre that should be the least standard of all. "When Tolkien was writing *The Lord Of The Rings*, for example, all of their background is fairytale and that meant that – I'm sorry for using a pretentious phrase – it had a kind of truer heart," says Carter. "Everybody seems to have gone: 'Years and years of folk tales and mystery and magical mirrors and iconic things are completely lost Look, orcs!' Everyone works with orcs. They're Tolkien's invention, why are they in your world? Why do they belong there? I'd rather use those totemic images – things that you almost kind of half remember from childhood. It all comes from childhood images, really. That's why you so often get this childish layer over the top of it: people use these things without understanding where they came from."

At this point our time at Lionhead is drawing to a close and the day ends, as it began, with Molyneux. *Fable II*'s development period is the final topic of conversation: "I've learned a hell of a lot as a designer I came out of *Fable* in a pretty desperate position with the PR and the hype almost getting out of control, and there was this..." Problem? "I didn't think people would care about acorns growing into oak trees! And that was never meant to... it was a feature we had in the game and we could do it but it was an insane, stupid feature and it took up so much time, and I cut it in the blink of an eye. And that became such a focal... such a... that really fucked what people thought of Lionhead. And me and the way I talk to the press."

It's a situation about which Molyneux may have become obsessive. Tellingly, it's the only section of the interview in which he curses. "I felt I had to stop making games that were just a collection of interesting features that people like talking about and journalists like writing about but actually, when you get down



"We wanted to keep that sense of lushness that *Fable* had," says McCormack. "Even though it's a much more open space, I think we achieved that."

games and really love them, but we wanted to do something maybe more European – the Brothers Grimm fairytales, the dark stories." In the planning stages Carter benevolently forced on the team works like *The Company Of Wolves* and Jim Henson's *The Storyteller*. "We were sitting there with our mouths open, thinking: 'Nobody's touched this'. I mean, films have, but no one in games," recalls McCormack.

That hints at what really sets *Fable* apart from superficially similar titles: it's much more fairytale than fantasy. "There's something fundamentally different between them," says Carter. "Fairytales are about vagary, they're about very clear moral themes, they're about very specific and understandable bits of imagery, and then letting your own mind fill in the rest." The distinction is so much more than semantic



The subtleties this time around include the idea of purity and corruption: the gentleman on the left is a purer breed of evil than his companion. What makes you corrupt? Well, drinking too many beers certainly makes a start.



to playing, it is just that – a mad collection of little fucking features that don't actually, truly, fit together in any way. What it is, is learning that I'm not making *Populous* any more where the story didn't matter a jot. Those games were about the core gameplay and that carried the whole game: *Populous* was 500 levels – you went from one to 500 and that's it, that's the game. We are making entertainment now, and entertainment is all about how you feel at the last word of this story. I had to realise as a designer that I was making things to entertain people and that story and drama and memorable moments in a game are as important as ambient orbs and crime systems and getting married and having kids. Perhaps far more important."

It's tempting fate to end by saying that *Fable II* looks like it might be the game Lionhead has always threatened. "We finished *Fable* with so many ideas for stuff we could go on to do, and now we feel we've realised a lot of that – it's all come together," concludes Copley. "We've really worked on our story, and I think that's the major step forward and why we're all so much happier with *Fable II*."

The overriding impression we're left with? It's not the story, or the graveyards, or the morphing, or the reactions of the NPCs, or the dancing, or the combat, or the vistas, or the dog, or the monsters, or the dialogue, or the minigames, or the co-op, or the swords, or the magic, or the meadows, or the buildings, or the expressions, or the crannies, or the guns. All of those things have their place, but the one thing that really leaves a mark is a stark image. It's just a little bar being reduced in size. It's something that, after everyone's played it, will become a new milestone for how games make their choices, and indeed their stories, matter. It's as simple as beginning to hit the player where it hurts. It looks like Lionhead has. And what do you know? It always was as simple as making sure that every choice has a consequence.

Only in... Britain?

Fable is one of very few modern games that feels identifiably British. Why is that? "Well, I think British entertainment is a little bit unique in the world," begins Molyneux. "And maybe it's the irreverence that we, as a nation, take to our creativity. I mean, if you look at music, punk could only have come about here – and this isn't knocking the Americans, but I think they have a tendency to over-think things, they would just not do certain things. They're so led by focus groups. It doesn't surprise me at all that *G.I. Joe* is made in Scotland, despite it having so much American influence, because who else but the British could have done someone like *Nico*, this iconic character who is ridiculously evil? I don't think Americans would even go down that route. You can think of examples instantly – *Lego Star Wars*, I mean, god, can you imagine an American poking fun at *Star Wars*? Even the thought of having little *Lego* characters, they wouldn't do it."



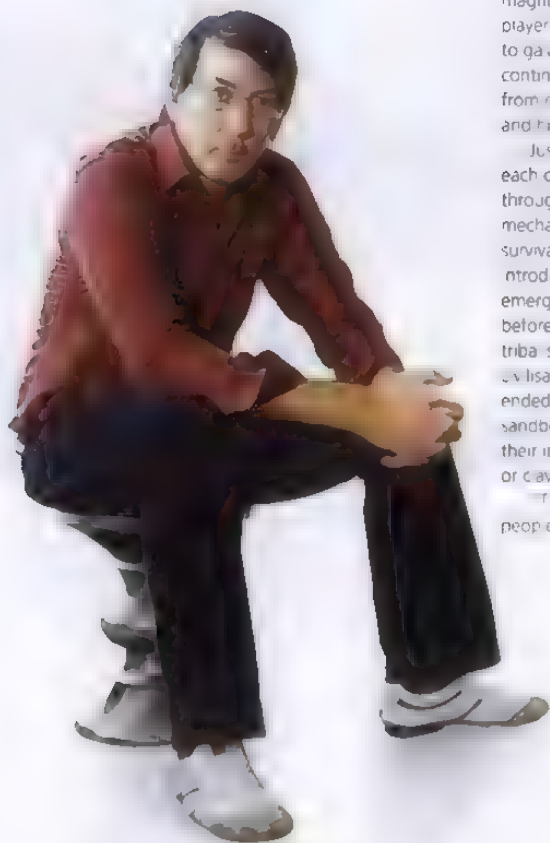
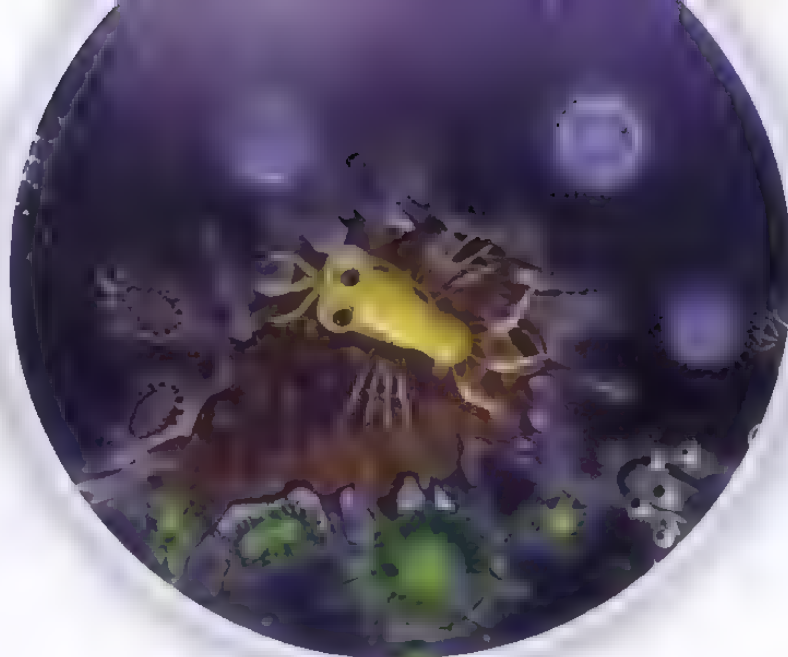
One of our rules is that nothing has a right angle. Don't draw a straight line – although there are degrees that are serene. We can get really picky but once you get it, you get it and that's where your imagination comes in. And it's not set in stone or the only way to Albion. So you design stuff architecturally from scratch for Albion – you don't just transplant a ruin from a French

Creature comforts

Will Wright wants you to fall in love with science.

We talk to him about the motive that underpins *Spore*, his sprawling simulation of life, the universe and everything





Towards the end of our time at Maxis, we find ourselves talking with the studio's founder, **Will Wright**, about his love of Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. *Spore*, Wright says, is a game partly inspired by the magnitude and subject of that earlier project – the player's actions scaling from survival in a rockpoo to galactic conquest just as Kubrick's camera continuously refocuses to capture the ascent of life, from mindless beast, through sentient tool use and high technology, onwards to infinity.

Just as *Spore*'s biological scale expands with each of its five phases, so the game gently sweeps through a gamut of increasingly complex game mechanics. Starting with a Pac-Man-like fight for survival at the cellular level, the game quickly introduces a three-dimensional landscape for your emergence on to dry land at the creature stage before giving you increased social abilities at the tribal stage and RTS-style global domination at the civilisation stage. The final space phase is an open-ended mixture of demanding strategy game and sandbox where the ability to shape worlds and their inhabitants is entirely placed in your hands – or claws, or suckers, as the case may be.

The basic backstory to 2001 was that the people who hid the monolith went around the

galaxy discovering species and trying to give them a nudge in the right direction to become intelligent," Wright explains. "And for them that was the most creative endeavour they could do. And that's the same thing you do in *Spore* – push this intelligence again and again into the galaxy."

But as comparable as *Spore* may be in its matter and scope, it is as distant from 2001 in aesthetic as it could possibly be. Kubrick's use of scale was matched by a profound emptiness, the importance of intelligence in the universe was underscored by its rarity, constantly overshadowed by the threat of terrible loneliness. Wright's game, meanwhile, is dense where 2001 is sparse, splitting at the seams with life – nearly all of it created by other people playing the game (see 'Share trade').

Nonetheless, it is not as hyperbolic to suggest some shared DNA in the scope of *Spore*'s ambition and the manner of its execution, with that most revered of cinematic creations. Wright, like Kubrick, has attempted to in some way depict the smorgasbord of sciences encapsulated by the epic drama of astrobiology, from survival of the fittest through sociology to the principles of terraforming. But whereas Kubrick's love of science manifested itself in an attempt to visualise the social dynamics

SPORE
PC
EA
MAXIS
US

E151 E164, E181, E187



of apes and future technology with rigorous fidelity, he sees *Spore* as a platform to enthuse players about topics with which they wouldn't usually engage.

"I'm not really trying to educate," says Wright, batting away a common misconception of his games' purpose with some finality. He's an intense speaker in person, alternately delivering ideas in short, abrupt bursts and eloquent lectures in a way that makes the interview feel rather more like an energetic rally than an easy conversation.

"I'm trying to motivate people to get interested in these subjects," he continues. "But, as you do research, you realise just how inaccessible these subjects are. They're buried in layers of obscure

In attempting to draw together so many scenes from a species' evolution, albeit in some light digestible form, *Spore*'s scope exceeds that of Maxis' previous games. We ask if there's a risk that in taking such a broad view, the depth is compromised to the extent that the necessary lessons end up misleading. In representing evolution in game form, for example, *Spore* gives players the opportunity to create their species' shape, adding pincers, teeth, fronds and proboscises in an attempt to dominate the ecosystem, could players come away from *Spore* thinking that evolution is driven by the conscious choice of the animal in question rather than random mutation and natural selection?

think in the armour of Darwinism. Regular people don't believe it. There's no theology or philosophy built up around it."

If Wright's assertion of the public's understanding of evolutionary principles sounds a little naive, then the presentation of religion in the game is likely to raise eyebrows, too – and has already done so. Judging by the debate raging on Maxis' forums, Religious domination becomes one of three strategies, alongside economic and military, that are available to the player in the civilisation phase of the game – an RTS-style section that sees you expand your empire from city to city until you have brought your entire species into your son beneath your banner.

What you get from stepping back and looking at all the different fields, all the different scales, is a very valuable perspective"

terminology, segmented out in their academic fields. A lot of the interesting science is inter-disciplinary, and academic institutions tend to compartmentalise. The geologists never talk to the economists, and they never talk to the biologists – but in fact there are some really interesting intersections between these things. What you get from stepping back and looking at all the different fields, all the different scales and all the different illusions of time as well, is a very valuable perspective that you almost never get stuck inside one of these disciplinary boxes.

"I think most people understand evolution enough to understand that we're misrepresenting it in that sense – if they believe in evolution at all," says Wright. "The idea that these forms are radically changing over time, well, the American creationists just don't believe that at all. People either believe in creationism, that the world was built 4,000 years ago with all the life forms, or they believe in evolution. The intelligent design movement, as far as I can tell, is more of a political ploy to get creationism taught in schools by looking for a





Your civilisation's particular strategic proclivity comes as a consequence of your actions in the previous phase, taking place at the tribal level. If your major interaction with rival tribes was social – wooing them with song or dance – rather than subjugating them with force – then your predisposition in the next phase of the game is as a religious nation. While, according to Wright, this simplistic segue has entranced the more militant atheists amongst Spore's community, the manner with which religious conquest is represented is unlikely to be wholly satisfactory to the devout either – the practicalities of this strategy differ little from military warfare: your vehicles and planes bombard enemy units with coloured beams, effectively preaching them to bits.

For all Wright's evident fascination with science, Spore is a game which paints its subject matter with the broadest brush strokes. This is no bad thing – it is perhaps a relief that the game's notional gestures to harsh Darwinian reality are shackled firmly behind the idea of play. Even the most outlandishly shaped creature will be able to navigate the world in some manner, facilitated by the astounding efforts of Maxis' animation team (see 'Please proceed'). Nonetheless, players' aesthetic freedom is to some small degree constrained by feasibility. It is still – possible, says Wright, to create a creature that is something of an evolutionary dead end. "You can certainly make creatures that are unplayable. There were discussions when we were building the editor about whether you could make a creature with no mouth, and we decided that unless there was a compelling reason not to, then we should let the player do that. The creature will starve to death, but you get the opportunity to go back in and fix it."

It is in Spore's deconstruction of a complex system such as evolution and its subsequent

Share trade

When we first started working on the game, Will's idea was that much of the sharing would be under the hood," says producer Carvl Shaw. "We call it pollination. So all this content would come from the server and all the content you created would go to the server, but you wouldn't really have any way to look at it. But while we were making Spore, sites like Flickr and Facebook were on the rise. We realised that people would want to be much more active in sharing things – they would want to see each other's content and share it. So if I like a creature I can go to the Sporepedia and see all the other things that its creator has made. Or I can see the achievements that he's obtained while playing, and I can go in and add them as a buddy or subscribe to his content."



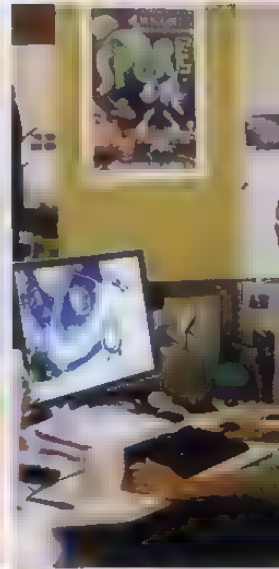
recreation as something playable that Wright sees as a common thread among the company's output over the last 21 years.

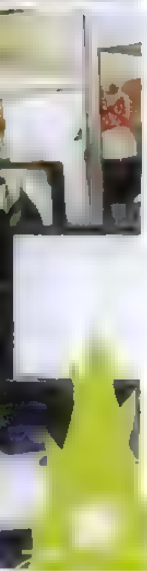
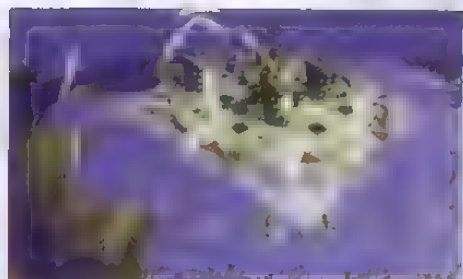
I think, starting with *SimCity*, we were kind of wrestling with the idea that games could be about reality," he says. "Science is a narrow range of reality. *The Sims* isn't really about science. *SimCity* is more about economics and sociology and urban dynamics. But I think they're all about taking aspects of the world around us and reinterpreting them as toys. Toys are a superset of games. If you think about a ball, you can think of that as a toy and you can mess around and even learn about physics from a ball. But you can also put rules around it and play a game with it: here's the goal state, here's the high score. That's where you take a toy that's inherently a more open-ended experience and constrain it to make it a game experience."

Potentially, at least, they don't come much more open-ended than a toy which allows you to create life and coax it to evolve from microscopic cell to space-faring super species. According to the game's executive producer, **Lucy Bradshaw**, it has taken a good deal of iteration to work out how it should be constrained, eventually settling on a three-way balance between the freedom to create, the impact on gameplay, and fidelity to reality. If the gameplay becomes too casual, the less personal input players feel they have upon the game and the less interesting and varied stories they can tell. If the gameplay dictates the design of the creatures to too great a degree, the greater players feel that their creativity is impaired.

"Will's original idea was that it would be a lighter game in each stage," she says. "What we found was, in order to give a lot more weight to the player's input in the editors and creators, we went deeper in terms of how it plays out in a strategic sense. As a creature, your primary definitions are being either social or aggressive, and the secondary strategy is movement type. Are you going to be sneaky or big and lumbering? Are you going to be fast or be able to jump and glide? And these really do add quite a bit of strategy in terms of how you approach other species on the planet. You might, for example, go the sneaky and social path – the meek shall inherit the Earth."

While *Spore* represents an intersection between a game and a simulacra of scientific principles, however, it is not as instantly recognizable a representation of our universe as previous Max's games. The prevalence of boggle-eyed monsters, though they may well exist somewhere out there in





the cosmos – sets the game at a distance from the superficially mundane urban setting of *The Sims* or *SimCity*

"It's a different sell," says Wright. "I think [people's attraction to *The Sims*] was about accessibility. A lot of games are typically built on these fictional worlds that assume you have read

"When players talk about powerful experiences they had in other games they never describe the cutscene they saw"

JRR Tolkien and that you know what an orc is. There are filters that require you to be fascinated by World War II or soccer before you can even begin to play or understand the premise of a game. A player of *The Sims* innately has enough experience to understand what the ground rules are because everyone needs to eat and sleep and get jobs and have friends.

Yet, as Wright goes on to observe, very few games seem to make use of contemporary reality as a setting, despite its overwhelming prevalence in TV films and books. Just why does the medium eschew the accessibility of the everyday world in favour of space commandos and elves?

I think games started out in the interior reptilian brain which is about fear and aggression and adrenaline," Wright responds. "It becomes an arcade experience – action-oriented. And over time they begin to move to the outer layers of the brain where we're actually getting deeper thought and things like philosophy and more subtle emotions. Also I think games were seen initially as this kind of Walter Mitty experience – wouldn't it be great to be a captain of a ship, or save the universe? We've always thought of games on the level of escapism, this desire to be someone else other than who I am – never games that I could make about myself. But in *The Sims* one of the first things people do is they put themselves in the game, their family, their house – it's this weird, almost spreadsheet-like experience, an abstract caricature of their real life that is almost more

ene than putting yourself into a futuristic space adventure fighting aliens. *Spore* really is about pulling an imaginary world out of the player as well. It's not the story of their life, but the creatures, buildings, cities and planets are all things that the player created, and they can look back at it and say "Wow, this whole world emerged from my

imagination as opposed to the imagination of George Lucas or someone else'."

It's this absence of a driving, predetermined narrative that unifies Maxis' games – instead, they give the player the opportunity to create their own stories through the mechanics of play. For Wright, the idea of channelling players through a fixed narrative goes against the grain of the medium.

When players talk about powerful experiences they had in other games they never describe the cutscene they saw to each other," he says. "They describe something unique that they've done or discovered in the game. If you sit someone down in front of *The Sims*, even someone who hasn't played it before, they would inherently be mapping a narrative over the top of the play experience. So they turn their play into a story. Story is just a way to encode an experience that you had in a way that has specific causal linkages revealed. And if you link all the stuff that happened in a causal chain then that becomes the story."

The question that continues to hang over *Spore* is just how many unique experiences a player will have, and whether these will be remarkable enough to make good stories. Already those who have played the game are swapping tales. Developers at Maxis recall being attacked by something resembling a giant whack-a-mole table. A fellow journalist **stax** of the time he saw two races of chair-like beings engaged in bitter warfare.



YOU'RE WEIRD

**Please
proceed**

[illegible]

we might tell you about the time we laid siege to a city whose buildings all resembled toasters. Pointedly, however, most of these stories don't find their origin in gameplay, instead recommending the power of its editing tools and the fact that *Spore's* content-sharing system populates your universe with the many and varied creations of other players. How long will the novelty of surreally juxtaposed creations last, you wonder, and are the mechanics of play themselves suitably complicated for other scenarios to emerge that are worth retelling?

Even if *Spore* only manages to succeed in one facet of its staggering ambition – if it is only a brilliant toy or a comprehensive creation tool rather than a fulfilling game – then it will have achieved something worth noting. Already the vast number of creations, now well exceeding the number of known species on Earth, suggests that *Spore* has set a new benchmark for accessible editing tools and sophisticated content sharing. There remains much to admire about Wright's determination to create a brand that promotes a playful and personal approach to science.

"And not just one science, but all of them," says Wright, talking of what lies next on the agenda, including future *Spore* products outside of games. A lot of people think that science is something that's done in a lab by people in white coats—something that's not a very personal or creative experience—but it can be."

Bring your



Create your website in 4 easy steps with the 1&1 WebsiteBuilder. No HTML knowledge needed!

1 Choose your layout



With over 5 Million websites, 1&1 is one of the world's largest web hosts. 1&1 employs over 500 in-house developers. These highly trained programmers deliver the absolute best in what's at the forefront of technology, making 1&1 consistently first to market with the latest advances in communication.

website to life with 1&1!

**Advertise
your website!**

**1&1 Home Package
now with 100
personal business
cards!***



For a limited time 1&1 are giving away 100 individual business cards with the 1&1 Home Package. Promote your small business or personal website with stylish business cards and promote your website..

Terms and conditions apply, please see website for further details

* Special offer valid for a limited time only

1&1 HOME PACKAGE

Includes 1 FREE .uk Domain

for the life of your package

The 1&1 Home Package is ideal for creating an attractive internet presence for all your needs, whether you are building a business site, a family web page, a blog or a photo gallery. In 4 easy steps, your website is online

- 1.5 GB Web Space
- 20 GB Monthly Traffic
- 400 2 GB IMAP/POP3 E-mail accounts
- Free WebsiteBuilder
- 1&1 Blog
- Photo Gallery
- SMS Manager
- 1&1 WebMail
- Google Sitemaps
- Free CGI's
- PHP 4 & 5
- 99.99 % Up-Time Guarantee
- 24/7 Express Support
- ... and much more!

**1 .uk
Domain
for
FREE!**

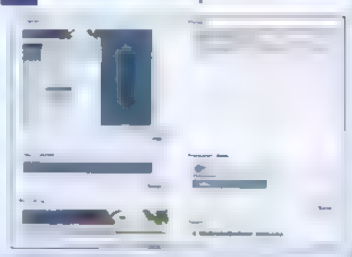
£4.99

2 Arrange your pages

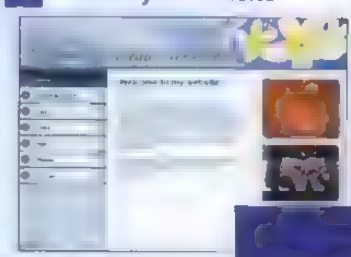
Navigation Tree: Online Shop

- Favourite Bands
- Lyrics
- Links
- Tips
- Photos
- Family
- Me
- Contact

3 Add text and pictures



4 Publish your website



MEMBER OF
**united
internet**

Call **0871 641 21 21**

Visit our site **www.1and1.co.uk**

1&1



With both Wii and DS sales proving unstoppable, Nintendo's future has never looked brighter. So why is its most ardent fanbase feeling shut out?

You can tell a lot about a company by the way it chooses to talk to its customers. In 1985, all Nintendo needed to say to conjure up the exciting world of home videogaming was the boyishly simple 'Now you're playing with power!' Travel forward 20 years, and things are a little more complex. By 2006, one of the taglines chosen to introduce the company's latest multi-million seller was the catchy 'Can you remember what you had for lunch the day before yesterday?' It's the kind of approach you might expect from a dentist or a dietician more than the legends who rule the house of Mario. It's just one indicator among many. Nintendo has changed

And it has the bank balance to prove it. The company sells consoles as fast as it can ship them and its stock is flying high, no surprise given that its profits for the first quarter rose by 33.7 per cent to a head-spinning ¥107.3bn (£507m). But, as with all transformations, this rebirth has come at a price. There may have been glowing write-ups in tabloid newspapers and lifestyle magazines, but there have also been rumblings of discontent from deep within Nintendo's traditional heartland. Many lifelong videogamers are not pleased by the firm's new success – they're feeling forgotten

A look back at a little history proves just how unexpected Nintendo's new success has been. The company's recent, dramatic upswing in fortunes is the result of a strategy that may have been percolating deep behind the serene white façade of the firm's Kyoto offices for some time, but the first observable signs that the name behind hardware such as the Power Glove and Virtual Boy

was feeling revolutionary again came with the release of DS, the handheld that became a cultural phenomenon, shifting tens of millions of units and many more millions of pieces of software to plug into them. Looking back, the success of the console seems inevitable, but the simple truth is that few outside of Nintendo thought it was going to make quite such an impact. Most industry pundits thought the sleeker PSP was going to flatten this underpowered oddity with its strange mish-mash of features and bulky casing. Sony's hardware has turned out to be far from a failure, of course – it's just that the astonishing success of DS sometimes makes it look that way.

Observers were cannier by the time Nintendo fully revealed its Wii strategy at E3 2006, but only slightly so. The odd choice of name was still provoking suggestions that the company had gone quietly insane, and Microsoft was so certain of the device's inability to compete with Xbox 360 that it took the unprecedented move of suggesting that its userbase might like to buy a Wii alongside its own console rather than dirty themselves with a PS3. Microsoft is not suggesting that any more. As Wii hardware shortages continue, Nintendo's sales figures have sailed past Microsoft's own, while Xbox 360's interface is undergoing surgery to bring it more in line with Nintendo's vision. Not bad for a console that once struggled to shift its perception as a GameCube in a different-shaped box, which had initial thirdparty support so thin that to fill the allotted time in its E3 press conference, Nintendo had to sneakily show everything twice.

But, as long-time fans might grumble, at least the company was still showing games

back then. Come 2008, despite an outing for *Shaun White Snowboarding* and a new *Animal Crossing*, Nintendo's E3 press conference painted a picture of a company on the brink of becoming a fully fledged lifestyle company, each new reveal almost as likely to be a new kind of lawnmower or innovative smoothie-maker as a videogame. That the climax of the event was not a new *Mario*, a *Zelda* or even – as some more optimistic types had dared to hope – some new incarnation of *Kid Icarus*, but *Wii Music*, a digital toy with little, besides the format, to tie it to the world of games at all, spoke volumes.

The content of the conference was perfectly acceptable – it was just directed at the wrong audience. These were messages for the mass market rather than an increasingly jaded videogaming community. It became clear that Nintendo had manoeuvred itself into a position where E3 no longer puts it in touch with the audience it is truly trying to reach.

For over two decades, Nintendo has been synonymous with the best in videogames – even during the GameCube era, when it was desperately attempting to capture as much as possible of a market that seemed to have grown tired of jumping on mushrooms when it could endlessly restage the Normandy Landings instead. Now it's back on top, it seems unable to please the very people who once cheered for it when it was being written off. With mainstream consumers forming lines around the block, why is Nintendo now struggling to satisfy hardcore gamers? Here, we look at ten factors that lie at the heart of the issue



Shigeru Miyamoto is no longer the man who made Donkey Kong

One of the most instinctive game developers, Miyamoto is also among the most autobiographical, capable of turning childhood memories or rave exploration into *Zelda*, or a neighbour's terrifying dog into a Chain Chomp. His importance to Nintendo cannot easily be overstated. While many claim that he is now more figurehead than designer, he remains the creative driving force behind most of the company's big ideas. "He is empowered to cancel or demand a complete remake of any NCL project," explains one source with close ties to Nintendo. "Projects often spring off the back of a single simple suggestion of his, quickly turning into a fully fledged and big-budget development, either in house or from a second party. There are few such individuals that I am aware of in the games business. That he has this respect and power undeniably gives him a huge influence on the direction of Nintendo as a whole."

And, as Miyamoto ages, his preoccupations, and therefore his influence on Nintendo, also change. *Pikmin* – an RTS game based on the distinctly un-childish joys of gardening – was the first sign that his focus may have been shifting, and since then we've had the chance to enjoy the fruits of his other emerging interests: pet dogs, exercise, and now music. And naturally all of the time Miyamoto is spending turning his grown-up interests into Nintendo software is time he isn't spending overseeing development on the new *Zelda* and *Mario* titles Nintendo's more traditional fans demand

2 Nintendo is not, actually, a videogame company

Or, to put it another way, by leaving hardcore gamers behind, Nintendo is being entirely true to a 120-year-old strategy that has seen it move from making playing cards through to running taxi companies and TV stations, and selling instant rice. In one respect, this is a company that owes its audience another Mario game no more than it still

owes the denizens of Japan's gambling dens fresh decks to play with. Nintendo's ability to switch directions and innovate, which has made it the gamers' darling for so long, is also the same quality that sees it moving on periodically, and drastically re-inventing what the company is about. Nintendo's is a history rich with opportunism, in which making the world's most brilliantly endearing games is, in some ways, just another business interest.

This should hardly be surprising. Nintendo has been careful to distance itself from the term 'videogame' before, crafting the delicately ambiguous name for the Nintendo Entertainment System after the arcade crash of 1983. By bypassing the controversial subject of videogame violence and the whims of an overly critical specialist press, and heading straight for the rarefied world of daytime television and health endorsements, Nintendo can continue with a more serious mission.



"Projects often spring off the back of a single Miyamoto suggestion, quickly moving into development"

giving shareholders a return on their investment.

The ultimate proof that Nintendo is moving on again may lie with its branding. The average Nintendo advert now looks like a BUPA infomercial, and is just as likely to be tucked in among the leg waxes and perfumes of *Cosmopolitan* than the orcs and space marines of a gaming magazine. *Brain Training* has even made it into the pages of the *Daily Mail*, where videogames are most often discussed in terms of how they are proving to be negative influences on modern youth.

Our insider observes: "It seems very obvious with hindsight, but from the SNES through to GBA, Nintendo were essentially feeding their own fans and no one else. Whilst projects like the GB Pocket Camera, *Mario Paint* and the N64DD all seemed to be outside of the norm, they were still aimed squarely and exclusively at the standard userbase. That can't be said of the Wii or DS."

Making Nintendo games for hardcore gamers is difficult

It's especially difficult given Miyamoto's habit of, as they say, 'upturning the tea-table' and scrapping projects at a relatively advanced stage. ("The tea-table thing has become a bit of a running joke in recent years, but it definitely still goes on metaphorically, at least," says our source, before conceding, "It's difficult to feel aggrieved about it when it happens, of course, considering it's always in pursuit of a better game.") The big, lavish, surprising Nintendo games fans demand take enormous investments of both time and money. *Super Mario Galaxy's* development began in earnest in 2004, but it was based on work that went back to the birth of GameCube. And, after all that, the game failed to sell in the numbers Nintendo projected, while *Twilight Princess'* sales also came up short of expectations.

But time and money may be only part of

the problem. The staggering size of its past successes, coupled with the nostalgia-space it now holds in the folk memory of an entire generation, means Nintendo has to walk a difficult line between the innovation fans demand from a title, and delivery of the traditions those same fans want even more. In circumstances like this, the repeated criticism aimed at some of *Twilight Princess'* mechanics and set-pieces – that they were beginning to feel a bit musty – should have made Nintendo's internal dev teams jumpy. With familiarity finally starting to wear thin and extreme reinvention costly and exceedingly dangerous, it must be hugely tempting to try something totally different. After all, when you've had to shoot Mario into outer space in order to find a new spin on the formula, where do you go next? Suddenly *Wii Music*, centred as it is on a topic with supremely broad appeal, makes more sense

Making Nintendo games for hardcore gamers is easier

It's ironic that a title with so much maths in it should lead to such a simple calculation for Nintendo. *Dr Kawashima's Brain Training* took a team of nine developers 90 days to make, and since 2005 has sold over 13 million units. Taken in isolation, *Super Mario Galaxy*'s six million sales stack up nicely, but when you actually sit down to do the sums, *Brain Training* is what some would call the no-brainer. Given the data, if this were any company other than Nintendo, the prospect of it never again going through the pain of a big-budget title would make a great deal of sense.

Nintendo dislikes the terms 'hardcore' and 'casual', focusing instead on the 'core' and 'expanded' audiences, and the success of games like *Wii Fit* and *Brain Training* – which sell consistently well, fitting into the so-called long-tail model – suggests that this expanded audience may ultimately provide a more stable audience basis than the smaller numbers of core gamers, who move in packs and continually crave the new.

With DS and Wii, Nintendo has proved an important point – that graphics don't matter much to its newly expanded audience. At its most dynamic, *Brain Training* looks like clip art, but it has outsold the spectacular-looking *Crysis* many times over (let's not get into the PC piracy debate right here). Complex gameplay and groundbreaking graphics can be expensive distractions – but without them you're less likely to keep the people happy who once bought 16bit Super Nintendo

consoles because they did such convincing jobs of performing like £1,500 *Street Fighter II* coin-ops.

Even Nintendo's 'hardcore' games are no longer hardcore

Nintendo would perhaps say that it is making its games more accessible. Others would say that it is dumbing them down. However it's expressed, it is a common theme that runs from *New Super Mario Bros* to *Zelda: Phantom Hourglass*. This stripped-down approach can't be entirely explained away by the fact they were made to be played on the bus. No, they were made to be played by an audience



Nintendo will never again make the mistake of letting its competitors decide the rules of engagement

who may not be entirely familiar with the evolved mechanics and deep traditions of two extremely long-running series. The results? Both games left most serious fans of the two series feeling a little empty. And both games sold extremely well, especially in Japan, and especially, according to Nintendo, to female DS owners.

Consider Nintendo's biggest hobbyist-focused release in recent months: *Super Smash Bros Brawl*. Here is a game that Nintendo has been offering as an in-joke-riddled love letter to the hardcore audience, but which even its own creator concedes is a button-masher if that's what you want it to be. And how much easier than *Mario 64* was *Galaxy*?

Focusing on hardcore users didn't work last time around

It's true that Nintendo never loses money on hardware, but it does sometimes lose market share. While Sony's PlayStation proved to be a pretty convincing victor over Nintendo 64, the really brutal battle was reserved for the next generation, with Nintendo losing out to both Microsoft and Sony, as exclusives dried up, thirdparty support disappeared, and the sweet-natured purple box that was GameCube suddenly seemed very out of step with the times. With its competitors ready to invest in even more expensive technology and

continue the fight over a dwindling, critical, and often highly erratic hardcore market, Nintendo surely needed very little further temptation to explore where else it could take the industry. It was only when the company made a conscious decision to strike out on its own terms that things turned around, and it's hard to escape the impression that Nintendo will never again make the mistake of letting its competitors decide the rules of engagement.

Nintendo is not giving fans the IP they keep asking for

You'd expect a 120-year-old company to have its

The old Nintendo intellectual property, and the new

Franchises have been the backbone of Nintendo ever since the company began putting Disney characters on its playing cards, and nothing displays the changing focus of the company as well as a look at five old IPs we'd like to see return, alongside five new IPs it has introduced in recent years.

PILOTWINGS

Dreamy yet unfailingly precise, *PilotWings* has been stuck in a holding pattern since the N64 version in 1996. Its quirky vehicle options and peaceful gameplay would presumably be a perfect fit

with Wii hardware, particularly in the light of the new Motion Plus add-on, but if there's a sequel in the pipeline, Nintendo is keeping quiet about it.

METROID

Nintendo's angelic spin on *Metroid* was released in 1986, and has since become a full-time internet rumour. With central character Prit cropping up in *Super Smash Bros Brawl*, many suspected a new game was on the way, but so far we've heard nothing. For those eager to see what all the fuss is about, the possibly overrated

original is available for download via Virtual Console.



STUNT RACE FX

An early polygon experiment and a collaboration between Nintendo and Argonaut, *Stunt Race FX* is an

often-forgotten delight in the Super Nintendo back catalogue. Although the use of 3D wouldn't wow as much as it did in 1994, the mix of oddball presentation and solid handling could prove to be something worth developing.

EARTHBOUND

Part two of Japan's phenomenally successful *Mother* series, and the only game in the trilogy to get a western release, we dare not speculate too much on what news of another *Earthbound* would do to those who follow the series. But seeing its unique remit – trad

RPG mechanics in untraditional surroundings, where you're likely to be attacked by a table lamp – on Wii would surely be a delight.

URBAN CHAMPION

Nintendo's own *Fight Club*, *Urban Champion* gave players a high punch, a low punch, and the opportunity to be hit over the head with a flower pot, all while exploring the gritty realities of inner-city violence. Some might call it a bit inappropriate in the current climate, but it's hard not to hanker for another trip down that manhole.



fair share of traditions, and while Nintendo may wallow in nostalgia and bust out the photo album when it comes to family gatherings such as the *Super Smash Bros* and *WarioWare* series, it's been strangely reluctant to mine its back catalogue more substantially of late. Whether it's out of tiredness with the same old formulas, or fears at spiralling costs of standalone game development, Nintendo remains deaf to the internet screams for another *Kid Icarus* or *PilotWings*. Ultimately, the reason may be simple: even though there are guaranteed sales for even the less well-known characters in the Nintendo's history, why take the risk on a game aimed at such a limited demographic when the market you're steadily getting better at reaching doesn't even know what an Ice Climber is?

At Nintendo, online is an option, not an essential

Mario Kart moved online with both DS and Wii, and games like *Tetris DS* and *Advance Wars: Days Of Ruin* have proved that Nintendo can provide stable hosting environments, but the company seems more interested in the internet as a means of providing delightful oddities like the Mii Contest Channel and performing veiled market research than for creating forums to capture the flag. Nintendo's infuriating Friend Codes are said to exist because of the company's concerns over online identity sharing, and its focus on family-based gaming is behind its reluctance to follow the markers laid down by Xbox Live. Ultimately, the Wii download service and online environment are an

awkward combination of the overly simplistic and the unnecessarily fiddly when compared to the relative seamlessness of Microsoft's and Sony's services. And how important are Xbox Live and PSN to console gamers nowadays? Very.

Thirdparty publishers like Nintendo just the way it is

With an emphasis on younger players, and a slower marketplace that doesn't see triple-A titles emerging on its platforms every other week, Nintendo has created the perfect environment in which lower-tier games can sell – and sell well. *Carnival Games* would have fallen out of the charts by now had it been an Xbox 360 title going head to head with titles like *Ninja Gaiden II* and *Mass Effect* – but up against Cheggers' *Party Quiz* and *Fruit Fall*, its star continues to twinkle. Selling to a wider demographic, which includes young girls and tweens, means that simpler, cheaper titles with the appropriate licences bolted on can enjoy more space – and life – on the game store shelf. Having been delivered this new, lucrative audience, what publisher in its right mind would want to work again with the old Nintendo?

Nobody else does Nintendo games as well as Nintendo

While it may be nothing more than simple sums and a little light reading, there's no escaping the fact that *Brain Training* is also a classic piece of design – intuitive and smart in its presentation, charismatic in its interactions, and full of clever

little touches that make users feel at home, keep them coming back, and even convince them to spread the word. The truth is, even if you don't like Nintendo's new definition of videogames, it's still making some of the most polished and intelligent examples around, and it's telling that other companies have found it difficult to replicate the success, even when the template is as simple as Dr Kawashima's textbook world of stickmen and Sudoku puzzles. When it comes to production values, the new gaming demographic may not have the demanding tastes of those who've been playing for years, but Nintendo does not believe that games made for this audience should be simply cobbled together.

Then there's the fact that star designers tend to want to work with more powerful hardware, anyway, along with the age-old issue that other companies struggle to understand Nintendo's technologies as well as the Kyoto company does itself – particularly when they're as woolly as Wii's or as packed with options as DS's. There have been a few notable exceptions, as proved by games like *No More Heroes*, *Boom Blox* and *Zack & Wiki*, but by and large, thirdparty developers struggle to achieve the sort of results Nintendo seems to pull off so effortlessly. Furthermore, those notable exceptions all have one thing in common, and that isn't a placing at the top of the charts.

In an E3 interview with *Edge* in 2004, Nintendo president Satoru Iwata admitted that the Wii controller could be difficult for hardcore



WII SPORTS

Simple and, ultimately, fairly limited, this is still a title most Wii owners keep close to hand. Compared to other sports games, it's pretty thin in most departments, but the presentation

is pitch-perfect, and bowling's ability to rope in the unlikelyst family member makes it as much a part of Christmas as reruns of *Die Hard*.

WII FIT

It takes something like *Wii Fit* to bring back distant, hazy memories of the days when games actually sold out and you had to wait for new stock. With a surprisingly sturdy Balance Board peripheral and a suite of charmingly presented exercises, it's hard to call *Wii Fit* a videogame as such, but distractions like

hula-hooping and a jog around WiiFit Island are unmistakably the work of Nintendo.

NINTENDOGS

One day, Shigeru Miyamoto announces that he's thinking about "the meaning of dogs". A week later and this much copied pet simulator is flying off store shelves around the globe. While you can dress your dogs up in a variety of clothing, you'll also have to take them for walks and, in an admirably disgusting inclusion, clear up after them too.

BRAIN TRAINING

It may be based on pseudo science and the cult of Sudoku, but whose quality of life isn't improved by a few multiplication sums every day? Revealing the secret pleasures of the GCSE exam paper, *Brain Training* has done more than most titles to broaden the audience for videogames, and, along with *Wii Fit*, its realisation that faddishness and the perception of being slightly virtuous can be as much of an appeal as dual-wielding SMGs means we're likely to see copycats for years to come.

WII MUSIC

Charming and knockabout, *Wii Music* is not nearly as offensive as Nintendo's recent E3 press conference may have lead you to believe, but your first experiences of it aren't going to sound very pretty, and it isn't really a videogame. If it sells, and chances are it will, it will be yet another indicator that Nintendo's new marketplace is capable of supporting a wide variety of experiences. If you're not impressed by its colourful world of mimicry that's probably because it isn't aimed at you, anyway.



gamers to get to grips with – and he didn't seem too bothered by that. No one can fault Nintendo for ambition: it planned nothing less than to disrupt a videogame market in which its own share was suffering, and replace it with one of its own devising, the true story of Nintendo's falling out with hardcore gamers is just how staggeringly successful it's been in doing this. How much of videogaming's current obsession with simplicity – seen everywhere from Cliff Bleszinski's assertion that the next Xbox controller should have fewer buttons, or the success of smaller, downloadable titles, or Peter Molyneux's aim to create, in *Fable II*, a game that everybody will be able to complete – has come from Wii and DS, and the brilliantly capitalist equality they've brought to the gaming landscape? By repositioning gaming as something that fits into the average person's life – something that more often than not could bring benefit to the average person's life – Nintendo has finally found a way into the average person's wallet, and burst out of the confined, if high-spending, traditional market of “geeks and otaku” (to use the revealing phrase of Nintendo Europe's senior marketing director, Laurent Fischer). Nintendo has unarguably reached a new audience, whether you believe it knew what it was doing from the start – and a speech on ‘disrupting development’ that Iwata gave at GDC '06 suggests the company had a pretty good idea – or whether you think it simply reacted brilliantly to a lucky fluke. Either answer should terrify the competition.

And it clearly does. With both Sony and Microsoft struggling to catch up to Nintendo's powered-down

vision, there's a real sense that an industry betting on income from hardcore gamers who wanted either bloody FPSes or complex RPGs has suddenly realised that it may have been battling over the table scraps all along. If, in order to bring this kind of change, Nintendo has had to step away from its traditional userbase to a certain extent, it's ultimately no different than its decision in the 1950s to abandon Hanafuda cards as its main source of income and try something else. And the most interesting question, now, as then, remains: with a company as wily and brilliant as Nintendo, after this new incarnation has run its course, where will it go next?

Nintendo wasn't available to discuss the content of this article, but it did provide a statement from its Japanese HQ. For the sake of completeness, we'll conclude with it here: ‘Nintendo has never lost its passion for core gamers. Nintendo would like to bring smiles to as many different faces and produce games which appeal to mainstream and gaming audiences worldwide. We have never neglected our core gamers. We still have developers working on popular core gaming franchises but we need longer to complete these games, approximately two to three years. These games are not ready to launch in early 2009 but are being worked on by all development teams. Recently launched popular Nintendo gaming franchises have included *Super Smash Bros Brawl* and *Mario Kart for Wii*. *Wario Land Shake Dimension*, a true return to the classic 2D platform adventure, will be available for Wii in September of this year. There is also a vast array of thirdparty core gaming titles available for the Wii console.’

Nintendo and the Blue Ocean Strategy

If Nintendo's market disruption is a brilliant piece of corporate planning, the force behind it may have been the business book *Blue Ocean Strategy*, by W Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne. Both NGA president Reggie Fils-Aimé and NGA CEO Satoru Iwata have referred to the book in the past, and Nintendo's appraisals of expanded audiences and an untapped market tend to be full of Kim and Mauborgne's terminology. The central thesis of *Blue Ocean Strategy* is that there are two marketplaces – a red ocean (defined, limited, and filled with warring competitors), and a blue ocean, the limitless unknown market where demand is there to be created rather than contested. It's an idea that Nintendo has clearly taken to heart. Perhaps other game companies would do well to heed that familiar childhood advice: play less, and read more.

The shape of Nintendo according to E3

Nintendo's press conference at this year's E3 won't be remembered as a vintage one. But what can we learn about the company's trajectory from such events?

E3 2003

Apparently, this is the year of connectivity, as Nintendo unveils a future filled with cables cobbling GameCube and GBAs together in one big generation defining tangle. With Will Wright on stage and *Pac-Man Vs* on the screens, the consensus is that Nintendo may be about to drive its business right off a cliff. Worryingly, the

biggest cheer of the event comes from the news that *Super Mario Bros 3* is making its way to GBA.

E3 2004

Up against XNA and PSP, Nintendo counters with an initialism of its own: DS. Nobody's entirely certain what to make of the console at this stage, but elsewhere Nintendo is getting behind a solid line-up of favourites including *Resident Evil*, *Star Fox*, and the first glimpse of *Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess*.

E3 2005

Xbox 360 fever is everywhere, and

Sony has its rubber ducks out again, but Nintendo's happy to lead with handhelds, focusing mainly on DS's forthcoming line up, and GB Micro, a retroed GBA. With no chance of recapturing the barnstorming success of 2004's hardcore games, Nintendo's new strategy is already becoming apparent, and while Wii is present, it's still back mysterious, and going by the name of Revolution.

E3 2006

Wii has landed, and along with a fair amount of discussion over the console's name, Nintendo is eager

to show off the new technology with a line up that the hardcore will understand: *Mario*, *Zelda*, and, perhaps less charmingly, *Red Steel* are front and centre, and the lifestyle software, for the time being, is reserved for DS.

E3 2007

E3 has changed, and Nintendo's message has, too. A large portion of its 2007 press conference is taken up with the fact that the company is now enormously rich, and has been able to grow the market into new demographics such as women and the elderly.

With fewer traditional games on display, *Wii Fit* is the main attraction, and the audience expect more familiar Nintendo faces, are slightly muted.

E3 2008

The disruption is complete. Nintendo's press conference is a volley aimed at the mass market, flying entirely over the heads of many E3 attendees. While games are present, the focus is now firmly elsewhere, and firm talk of hardcore titles – apart from the announcement that *Pikmin 3* is in the pipeline – is conspicuously absent.

Eguchi's Crossing



Nintendo's big 'core' game at E3 '08 was a new *Animal Crossing*. Here, its creator explains why Wii users should be getting excited about it

It is 1986. **Katsuya Eguchi**, a young graduate of the computer graphics course at Japan Electronics College, is faced with the most difficult decision he may ever face in his life: the company to which he will pledge his allegiance. Since in Japan, a 'salaryman' may stay with a company his entire life, this isn't a decision to be taken lightly. Eguchi, who spends as much time in his local arcade as he does in class, isn't sure he wants to go the traditional route and pick up the first job that comes along, allowing him to stay in his native Chiba.

"As I was getting ready to graduate I was looking at companies to join, and I wasn't sure what to do," Eguchi recalls when we

met him today. "Though as soon as I knew that was what Nintendo did, I thought, hey, I like games and games are related to computer graphics, so let's give it a shot and see what I can do!"

This decision, though not taken without care, had a deeper effect on the industry than you might expect. Though Eguchi's beginnings at Nintendo were humble – the first game he worked on was "A Formula One" racing game – but I don't think that ever got released overseas, so let's just drop that one," he laughs – his talent was quickly noticed and his work as level designer is ingrained in what some still consider to be the greatest game ever made: *Super Mario Bros 3*. But it was specifically his decision to



"The reason I wanted to make a game like this was because I was so lonely when I went to work for Nintendo in Kyoto"

meet him today. "One of my friends knew I loved to play videogames, and said to me 'What about Nintendo?' I replied 'What about that company that makes playing cards?'"

As strange as it may seem, three years after the release of the Famicom in Japan, Katsuya Eguchi had never heard of Nintendo, the videogame developer, only Nintendo, the hanafuda card manufacturer. "I played videogames since I was a kid. I really liked games a lot!" Eguchi protests. "But I never had a home console and always just went to the arcade to play. As a result I'd never heard of the Famicom or NES

move hundreds of miles from home to Nintendo's base of Kyoto, leaving family and friends behind, that led to the genesis of one of the most charismatic series of Nintendo's oeuvre: *Animal Crossing*.

"Animal Crossing features three themes: family, friendship and community," says Eguchi of his celebrated work. "But the reason I wanted to investigate them was a result of being so lonely when I arrived in Kyoto. Chiba is east of Tokyo and quite a distance from Kyoto, and when I moved there I left my family and friends behind. In



City Folk retains the same graphical style as its GameCube and DS precursors, right down to the slightly spooky, occasionally unnerving expressions that suit those cute little faces. There is more detail on show here, however, particularly when it comes to user customisable content.

doing so, I realised that being close to them – being able to spend time with them, talk to them, play with them – was such a great, important thing. I wondered for a long time if there would be a way to recreate that feeling, and that was the impetus behind the original *Animal Crossing*."

Animal Crossing was first published as a Japan-only N64 title in 2001 as *D Butsu No Mori*, over 14 years after Eguchi had first explored the idea. Although the game was originally commissioned merely as a way to utilise the realtime clock built into Nintendo's failed 64DD hardware add-on (before being released on cartridge), the idea of 'oneness' deeply informs the opening of the game and its sequels.

As *Animal Crossing* begins, the player is a stranger in a strange land. Delivered alone into a foreign town by train or taxi, with

THE ORIGINAL CROSSING
CITY FOLK
ANIMAL CROSSING
ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD
ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF
ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW HORIZONS
ANIMAL CROSSING: HAPPY HOME
RELEASE: NOV 90
TEA (JAPAN, US)



Working at Nintendo

"My first big game was *Super Mario Bros 3* but also worked on *Super Mario World*. At the time I was a big fan of action games, so I was really excited to be creating levels that I thought would like to play. So I was kind of a gamer designing levels for gamers! It was a thrill to be doing that."

Over the years since I've worked on *Star Fox* for SNES, my first as director and of course *Wave Race 64*. I did the course design for *Yoshi's Story*, too, and just kind of bounced around from title to title. And while all of this has been a lot of work, it's been a lot of fun as well."



The city itself (above) offers a completely new set of attractions along with some fresh spins on old ones.



few belongings and a barren shack to live in, you're initially forced into servitude for the ostensibly benevolent Tom Nook, the only comfort arriving from the letters you receive from your 'mom'. Delivering gifts and kind words, it's part of the thematic power of *Animal Crossing* that as the player grows more comfortable in the town, making new friends and creating a new home, these letters mean less and less until they're almost forgotten about completely.

With this kind of pathos embedded in the series, it's a surprise to discover that Eguchi is remarkably humble about the games' meaning to players. He has never heard of the Korean comic that circulated late last year detailing a son realising his mother's love by visiting her *Animal Crossing* town after her passing, but when we talk about it, he is obviously moved. "To think that I was able to help create something, or that something that I worked on, played such an important role in someone's life and helped them understand something important to them..." He pauses. "It makes me really happy."

No matter how shy he is about receiving credit for it, it's the series' commitment to connecting people, born of a lonely year in Kyoto, 1986, that means the most to Eguchi, and it's that which has influenced the progress of the series, from the first game's message boards and mail system (themselves referenced by *Wi's* frontend) through *Animal Crossing: Wild World's* Wi-Fi connectivity, and now to *City Folk's* WiSpeak periphery.

Though the WiSpeak add-on is not intended to be shipped with *Animal*



Crossing: City Folk when it is released in mid-November (in the US – a European date has yet to be set) the accessory has been designed with *Animal Crossing* in mind.

"With *Animal Crossing* we've always had at least the ability to consecutively visit the village," establishes Eguchi. "We could have four people in one village and they could all take turns playing, so you were playing in the same world, if not playing at the same time. With the DS version thanks to the wi-fi connection we were able to have four people playing at the same time. Now with Wii we've

headsets. It allows you to have a conversation with the people you're playing with as if you were in the same room. You can have this very natural back and forth. And because this is a room mic, you'll be able to have group conversations. So if there is one family on one Wii and one on the other, you'll all be able to talk to each other."

Though such a mic seems certain to falter under such conditions, with TV noise and competing family members making unwelcome contributions, we managed to play *Animal Crossing: City Folk* on the show floor of July's E3 event (admittedly a quieter place than E3's past) with an excitable Charles (voice of Mario's Martinet) on the other side, and it worked surprisingly well. Thanks to intelligent sound filters, and even with the non-stop babbling of a

Before you get in touch to say that it all looks a bit too familiar, we should point out that the backdrop, on these pages, originates from the GameCube version.

Level design

"What I learned about level design while working on *Super Mario Bros 3* was really how to make levels that were entertaining, that were fun and exciting because they presented a challenge, but also balanced that with the ability for them to be completed with a reasonable amount of effort so people wouldn't get tired, get angry or quit. I wanted the levels to be played from beginning to end, and working on *Super Mario Bros 3* was a really great way to learn how to balance all of those things to make something that was fun, but also something that people could actually complete."



The WiSpeak device allows the player to have a different sort of experience, according to what you might be doing. You can have a different sort of experience, according to what you might be doing. You can have a different sort of experience, according to what you might be doing.

carried over that wi-fi connectivity.

"But we thought a lot about what we could do to enhance that feeling that you were playing with those other people in the same room, or rather that they were right there with you, close to you. While we were trying to think about ideas to do that, our hardware group said to us, 'Hey, we just designed this mic peripheral – would that be of any use to you?' and we said, 'Wow, that's going to work really well with *Animal Crossing*!' So then we worked together to make sure both the hardware and the software meshed together."

Since the WiSpeak device is a mic placed on top of (or below) the TV, it "leads to a different sort of experience," according to Eguchi. "Certainly to what you might have had in the past from, say, traditional

real-life Mario (and Luigi) pouring forth, the results stood up to scrutiny.

There's more to *City Folk* than just greater communication options, however. Forever mindful that community is built not just through communication but by sharing, the options that exist for user creativity have expanded greatly, as has the ability to enjoy events with others.

Players will still be able to create patterns at the Able Sisters store, but now, if you're creating patterns for, say, a pullover, you'll be able to design not only the front but also patterns for the back, and each individual sleeve. "You'll also be able to create hats and other accessories to this level," enthuses Eguchi. "And when you create these items, Mable will ask you what you

were thinking, so you can categorise your items for other players."

"You'll also be able to do more than ever together when you play online. You'll be able to experience events or see concerts together, for example. And while in the DS version we discarded a lot of events that were popular in the GameCube version, we're bringing them back. We're including Halloween, we're bringing back Jingle, the reindeer that visits during the holiday event, and we've got some new events, too. For example, during spring we've got a special visitor who brings paint and eggs so you can have an egg hunt, and we also have a carnival that'll introduce another new character to the *Animal Crossing* world."

Describing *Animal Crossing: City Folk's*

Iterative design

"It's exactly what we did when designing levels for example on *Super Mario Bros 3*. Not actually in tandem with a testing team, but within our own development team. So if I was working on creating a level I'd get someone else from the team, maybe someone working on artwork or some other job and get them to play the level. We'd observe them as they played and think, 'Oh, this one section is too difficult', or 'This level concept doesn't work', but the most important thing I watched for was if they were having fun or not. It didn't matter so much if they were able to clear the level or not, clear the level by its design as long as they were having a good time while they tried."

"This process was repeated over and over and over again, with different participants of the team, until we came up with the final level - one that could be completed comfortably, and one that was fun to play consistently."

new features, Eguchi's face lights up and his speech quickens as he becomes more and more excited trying to explain it all. "Of course, we've kept in all the things that people have grown to like about *Animal Crossing*," he continues, smiling widely. "The furniture series, the items, the wallpaper and, as you've come to expect, we've also added a lot more to collect. Not only do you have new furniture series and new wallpaper to collect, thanks to WiiConnect24 new items to buy or make part of your collection will be downloaded to your Wii. The downloadable items are not already on the disc just waiting to be unlocked. They're downloaded online to your Wii, so we genuinely will be able to add any new items that we wish to the game."

In describing the new city location, reachable by bus from the player's village, Eguchi is at perhaps his most joyful. "The city is sort of a shared space for you and all of your Wii friends. In the city, you can have your hair cut at Harriet's beauty salon, but there are a so new features, for example the Auction House. Gracie also has her own store, there is the Happy Room Academy office, and there's even a theatre, where you'll be able to catch a comedy show!"

At Harriet's beauty salon, first seen in *Animal Crossing: Wild World*, players now have the ability to have a 'makeover' that

Eguchi and his team are focusing on introducing many more 'random' driven occasions this time around.

represents the face of the traditional *Animal Crossing* protagonist (usually only ever referred to as 'boy' or 'girl') with that of any Mii on their system. When we ask why *Animal Crossing: City Folk* doesn't make Mii more central to the experience, Eguchi is taken aback. "Well, we could have! We just chose not to. I think that a lot of people have a familiarity, or an attachment to the *Animal Crossing* main characters, so we thought that rather than limit them to having Mii as a player character, if we gave them a choice to create a Mii mask, it would give the player the chance to identify with the player character as they saw fit. Because we want the player to identify with their character. The option works better within the framework of the game, because players can say, 'OK, today I'm going to do this and I'm going to be a Mii', and on other days they can choose not to."

This possible attachment to *Animal Crossing's* main characters has also influenced another decision, to allow players to import their characters from *Animal Crossing: Wild World* into *City Folk*. "They'll

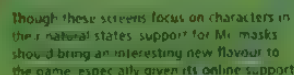
bring with them the ability to access all the things that they've unlocked in the catalogue, so it makes the move a little easier than it was from GameCube to DS." Not as easy as you might think, though, Eguchi laughs. "You'll still have to purchase those items again, and you won't be able to bring your bells across with you!"

Eguchi does recognise that some players will have developed rather an attachment to their personal Mii too, however. "Players can spend all their time as their Mii," he explains, but he's eager to elaborate on the playful possibilities of his team's design decision. "Something I think would be fun is to wear different Mii masks and mix it up a little bit! If you were going to visit a friend's village maybe you could wear the mask of someone else they knew and play a prank? Or dress up as a monster Mii - as Bowser - and give them a scare! That kind of thing will be a lot of fun, and that's the kind of thing we want to enable."

And the team has enabled many ways to visit other players' villages, too - not just across Wii's wifi capabilities. "If you want to play with your character in a friend's town



Naturally, filling your dwelling with as many attractions as your budget allows will become one of the game's key draws. The promise of new items delivered online over time should maintain interest.



Though connectivity is important, the coherence of the *Animal Crossing* world is just as important to Eguchi. "We really want to keep the *Animal Crossing* world its own special place," he says. Part of the reason Mi's don't replace the protagonists, it's also, Eguchi tells us, the reason Nintendo has no plans to offer a *Wii Animal Crossing* Channel. "It's a big game, a huge game for

In the same respect, other Wii features such as the Weather Channel will have no bearing on the game. "Weather patterns are not very uniform across the world, so if we included that in the game, some people would lose out on the variety of weather on offer," Eguchi sighs. "*Animal Crossing* relies heavily on the feeling of the changing seasons and weather—maybe on a rainy day you'll catch more fish—and because the game relies so heavily on

Players will be able to take photos within the game and transfer them to SD card or send them as letters from within the Wii Menu, but due to *Animal Crossing's* status as a "special place" it's unlikely there will be much more integration with wider Wii features than that. Despite Eguchi's protests that this was a good example of the expansion of communication options "not only in game but outside the game, too," it's difficult not to feel that at least in some ways *Animal Crossing: City Folk* is a missed opportunity to realign the Wii hardware's frontend to include an almost PlayStation Home-like experience.

The changes that have been made to the *Anima Crossing* formula for *Animal Crossing: City Folk* are subtle, and to some that will be a disappointment. But each change has been carefully balanced to fit the series' themes—family, friendship, and community—without making *Animal Crossing* any less a special place. And, if you've yet to visit, *City Folk* looks likely to be the most special yet.

"Of course we were definitely thinking of Wave Race when we were creating the Sports Resort's Power Cruising section, just because of the similarities between the products, and the thing that was important was trying to recreate the feeling of riding on the swells of water, maybe catching some air, and just even turning on the water by shifting their balance. We were really trying to think about what we could do to make it feel realistic – you know, that realistic feeling of being on water – and when we were doing that of course we remembered the work that we had done on the N64 and tried to use some of the things that we had learned from that to help us this time.

"We were also able to use the new technology of the MotionPlus controller to further enhance that experience."





MANUAL LABOUR

MOST OF US CLAIM TO NEVER READ IT, BUT THE DOCUMENT THAT ACCOMPANIES A BOXED VIDEOGAME CAN BE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE PACKAGE. SO WHAT IS THE SECRET BEHIND ITS APPEAL?

We've come a long way since *Pong*. The first ever commercial game instructions were characterised by brevity and utility, necessary thanks to the unfamiliarity of the concept. And, to be fair, *Avoid Missing Ball* for high score still stands up as a masterpiece of economy. But they blossomed into what might be gaming's greatest support act: a library of manuals that, despite their ostensibly functional

nature, gave context and colour to, and ultimately justified, their games.

There are two ways to consider manuals. You could say that they are simply functional, introducing a player to the controls, methods and combinations that dictate the experience. Seen like this, they're little more than glorified reference materials and possibly the most boring aspect of a game. But manuals can be, and

Rockstar's manuals are some of the best examples of their kind: the *Grand Theft Auto IV* companion follows in the tradition of the series by presenting a guide to the city, full of restaurants, bars and other locations you might like to investigate, as well as advertisements for Liberty City products. The PC versions of *Vice City* and *San Andreas* came in beautiful hardback 'tourist guides' that has aspirations for the coffee table. The disturbing and evocative *Manhunt* 'video catalogue', featuring Mr Nasty, is equally distinctive

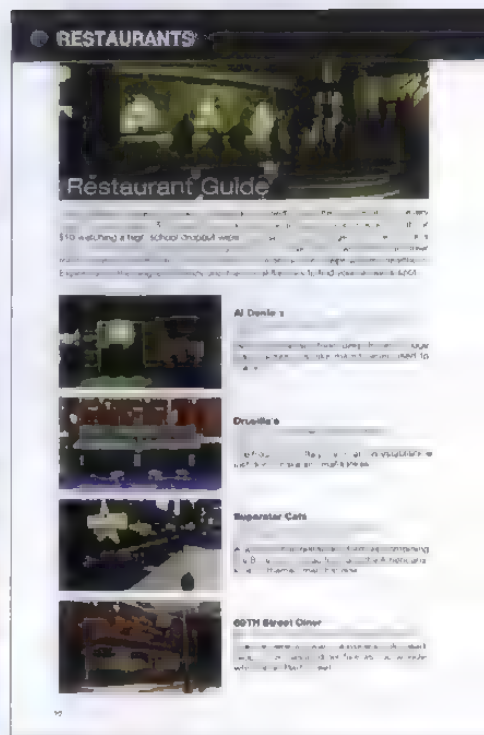
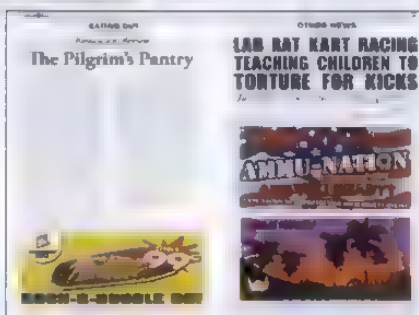
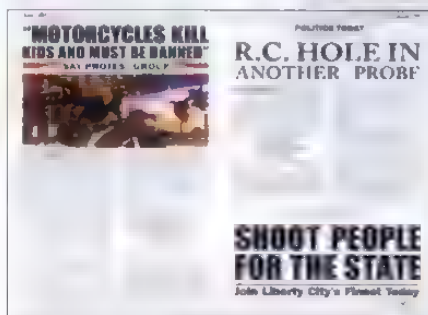
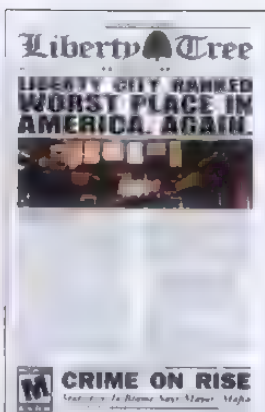
SATISFACTION GUARANTEE

"I guarantee absolute satisfaction - 100% of the time."



Every item in this catalogue is unconditionaly guaranteed. If for any reason you are not sat with it or with your purchase please notify us with in 30 days of receipt and we assure you dissatisfaction will be the last of your problems. Anyone caught encoding our films for distribution on the Internet will regret it guaranteed. Play nice, respect the game and everyone will get what they need. Break my rules and suffer my consequences.

- Mr. Nasty
DIRECTOR



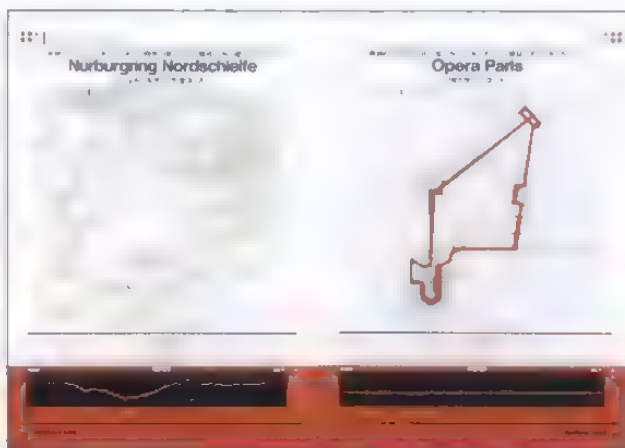
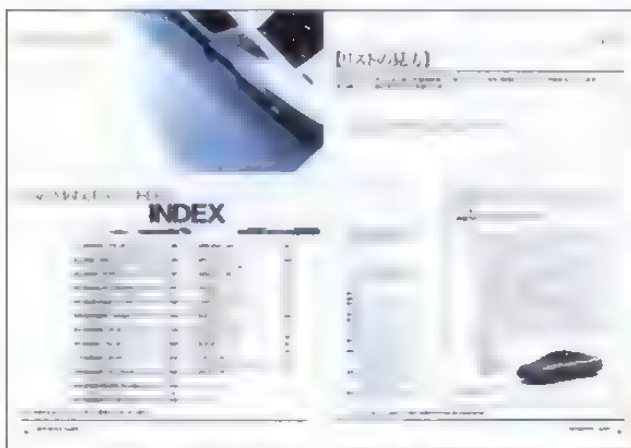
often are, something else they're your window into a new world. They can be treasure maps. They can be your first vicarious thrills at your new purchase, sucking in all of the controls and the story and imagining how everything slots together before the game goes near a TV. Best of all, they can be a part of the world, a piece of arcana ripped from a virtual realm and placed in your hands, a secret guide or journal or diary from one of the game's characters to you, the outsider, that establishes a game's world before a single button has been pressed.

Often these moments can be found in the most unexpected places. Microprose's *F-19 Stealth Fighter* for DOS may sound boring, but this deep, challenging title came with a cleverly pitched manual demonstrating many of the company's favourite tricks when talking to its consumers. A basic one was a section about the

team that arguably inculcated the cult of personality that surrounds many of its former developers to this day. 'A large number of features in this product started with Sid [Meier] saying, "Wouldn't it be neat if..."' The neat part is that Sid then goes and implements the code that very day! Little in-jokes abound about the manual itself. 'The rumor that marketing's office furniture was pawned to pay for the extra paper is entirely unfounded'. Perhaps the most important technique here, however, was to point out the tricks that a real F-19 might use (if it existed) - which, of course, were a part of the game. Their default status as reference manuals correspondingly allowed them to make the user aware of the depth of simulation.

This is one of the most under-appreciated arts in the manual-filling: it with information that, while not strictly necessary, serves to

further contextualise a simulation or world. It's something at which Blizzard is a dab hand. Its talent for world-building is obvious now, but has been on full show since the manuals for *Diablo II* or *StarCraft* - full of 'unnecessary' information about characters and races, the worlds they live in, and their culture. And is *World Of Warcraft's* doorstep of a manual going into great detail on the lore and history of Azeroth an indulgence, or an essential component in sucking players in to an experience that expects them to pay monthly? Series like *Ultima* went similarly deep into their own mythologies, while Black Isle's *Fallout* came with a 'field guide' that established the basics of the world while also acting as a practical survival tool - listing specifically how combat damage is calculated, how perks can be obtained, and what you can expect to be threatened with in its post-apocalyptic world.



The *Gran Turismo* games have always carried hugely detailed manuals outlining car and track specifications, with a level of obsession that suits their audience down to the ground. It's another manifestation of that old manual trick: by overloading on real-world information that is paralleled, and has practical value, in-game, the depth and veracity of the simulation becomes irrefutable.



The concept of a field guide, or a journal, is widespread, and is often incorporated rather half heartedly as a kind of standard (although Grasshopper's *Contact* took this one step further by presenting its manual as a blog). But some games go even further, and use the one physical point of contact with the player to not only inform how the game's interactions will

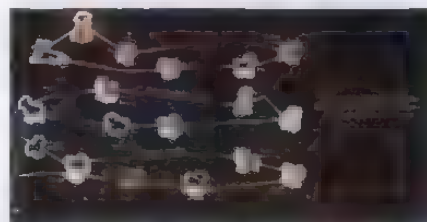
SOME GAMES USE THE ONE PHYSICAL POINT OF CONTACT WITH THE PLAYER TO NOT ONLY INFORM HOW THE GAME'S INTERACTIONS WILL WORK, BUT ALSO HOW THEY SHOULD

work, but also how they should. *Myst's* manual, for example, was a journal – except in this case it really was a journal, full of blank pages for your notes throughout, and preparing the player for a sedate and cerebral experience.

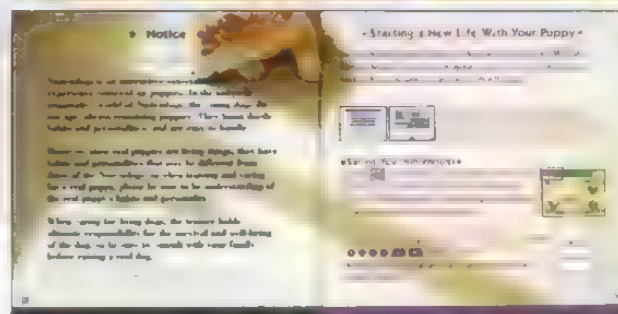
Can a manual do that – educate players in the ways a game needs to be judged? Nowhere has Rockstar's appreciation for the form been more brilliantly realised than with the manual for *Manhunt*: a 'Winter/Spring Catalogue and Preview Guide' to Valiant Video Enterprises releases. A brochure of video nasties that mirror the game's levels, it details the hunters that 'star' in each feature and offers full rundowns of the game's weapons. Barring the obligatory start-up guide, everything is presented in character and topped off with the personal and terrifying contribution of Mr Nasty himself – as well as a threat to anyone reading it who isn't meant to. Few manuals so effectively characterise their game while suggesting the interpretation that any serious mind should bring to *Manhunt's* particular take on videogame violence. It's not a piece of supporting material so much as a mindset that the player will need to understand the level on which the game truly operates.

The very physicality of manuals, of course, can be taken to other extremes than those explored by *Myst* and *Manhunt*. Infocom's games were typically presented with a cornucopia of remarkably realised materials affectionately referred to as 'feelies'. The most well-known, perhaps, was *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, which came with (among other things) a 'Don't Panic!' button, an official order for the destruction of Arthur Dent's house, some 'penit-sensitive' sunglasses (constructed from black cardboard) and 'How Many Times Has This Happened To You?' – an ad for the fictional Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy as well as the 'real' guide to the game. The Zork trilogy, meanwhile, came with 'Zorkmid' coins that a fan campaign attempted to get re-minted some years ago, and that had originally appeared on the Zork 1 box before Infocom actually began producing these 'feelies' alongside its games. Infocom was the most notable but by no

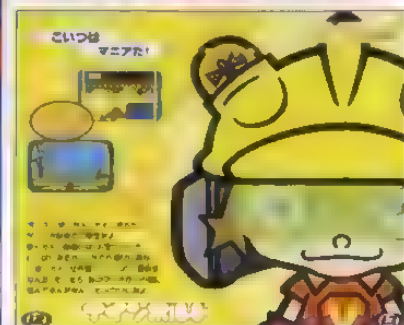
means the only company to offer supplementary goodies for players to emphasise that point of contact, and Nintendo's Integrated R&D Division (usually responsible for hardware) offers up a unique moment with *StarTropics*. This manual came with a piece of faux-aged paper, a letter to main character Mike from his uncle. So far, so usual. But at a certain point in the game, the uncle desperately says, "Tell Mike to dip my letter in water" – not only conflating the player and character but providing a bridge between them. Truly, a 'feelie'. Nintendo's dedication to



The *Nintendogs* manual is a masterpiece of a quite different kind – introducing mechanics that, while hardly unheard of in the field, would almost certainly be new to the majority of the game's audience. The instructions are couched in the language of a pet agency, and combined with cute photography and clear diagrams



The manuals for all of the Warrio series have real care lavished on them – they're not remarkable in terms of content, but in terms of production and extras it's clear WarrioWare's philosophy of 'more, more and more' extends outside the disc.



manuals hardly ends here, however it would be easy to point to the colourful sense of fun in the likes of the Warrio series (which almost without exception feature something out of the ordinary, whether that's simply stickers or, as in WarrioWare: Smoorn Moves, the manual being a newspaper written by the man himself). The company's real gift, however, lies in the more sedate area of clarity: large marked controller diagrams, maps of gameworlds, and even in the case of Earthbound's US release, a full-sized and super-detailed strategy guide.

jokes, it excuses the conventional aspects of the game's design even as it outlines them: 'So let's see what nonsense they've made up for this game, shall we? Hmm... well, I have to hand it to them. This time they've managed to come up with a decent storyline that doesn't involve the usual golden bananas. Only joking, kids! This one's worse than all the previous efforts put together! I know you probably aren't expecting a best seller, but wait till you hear this load of rubbish!' Even the 'How to Start' section wasn't free of his touch. Now then, just drop your

'THIS TIME THEY'VE MANAGED TO COME UP WITH A DECENT STORYLINE THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE THE USUAL GOLDEN BANANAS. ONLY JOKING, KIDS! WAIT TILL YOU HEAR THIS...'

Another favourite trick with properties as well-known as Nintendo's is to simply write as an in-game character. These personae give the opportunity for a running commentary on a game that can afford to be a little more irreverent than something straight-faced. Donkey Kong 64's manual was 'written' by Cranky Kong, the original Donkey Kong. It's old Rare at its best. Simply because there's so much truth in the



Gaze, great Exxos, upon the human from the blue planet! Purple Saturn Day was a sports day, founded by Hans Morlock: 'Kats off to him!' It's doubtful that the content actually helped anyone to play the game, but it does suggest that if you're having problems getting anything to work the reason is probably that 'your brain has turned to sticky garbage'.



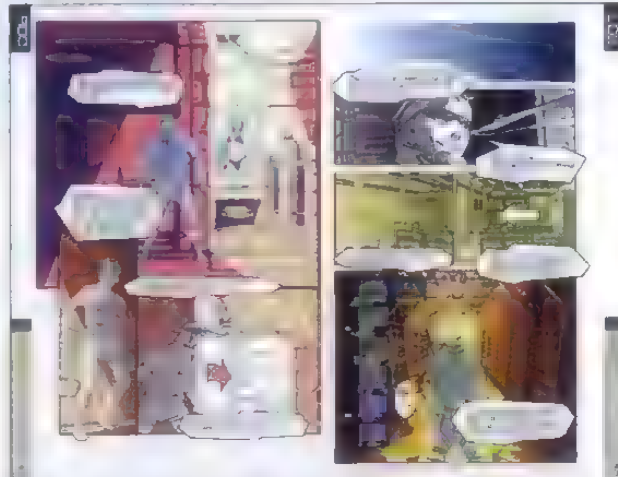


quarter into the slot and... er, sorry, wrong game'. But by far the most cutting comment, said with the benefit of hindsight on Rare's collectable platformer phase, has to be Cranky on the very same 'Trinkets and baubles, every last one! You'll be so busy collecting this tatty lot, you'll not notice the lack of gameplay. I never had to collect anything in my day, no sree, and my games were all the better for it!' Of course, *Donkey Kong* did have collectables - but we can excuse an old ape the odd slip

For sheer lunacy, however, it would be hard to beat the few productions of the French developer Exxos. Its first title, *Captain Blood*, came with a novella that seemed to be (unintentionally) written by monkeys with multiple personality disorder and a cursory knowledge of popular culture, featuring memorable ideas such as reproducing Pac-Men threatening the world and a recurring Charles Darwin who isn't dead, but 'living incognito. Even this paled into normality next to *Purple Saturn Day*, however, a sports game with a manual that promised 'on this day, they come to vanquish you, friend'. It was an Official

Participants' Guide and began 'OH EXXOS it is once more the new year on Saturn, the day of purple dawning, Wonder of Wonders. ATA ATA OH EXXOS YOU ARE GOOD FOR US' It is important to note at this point that Exxos is Philip Ulnch and Didier Bouchon referring to themselves, and at the foot of every page they included: 'I can feel Exxos doing me good' It featured a recipe book with instructions for the likes of a 'pain transmuter' and was, to say the least, irregularly spaced throughout

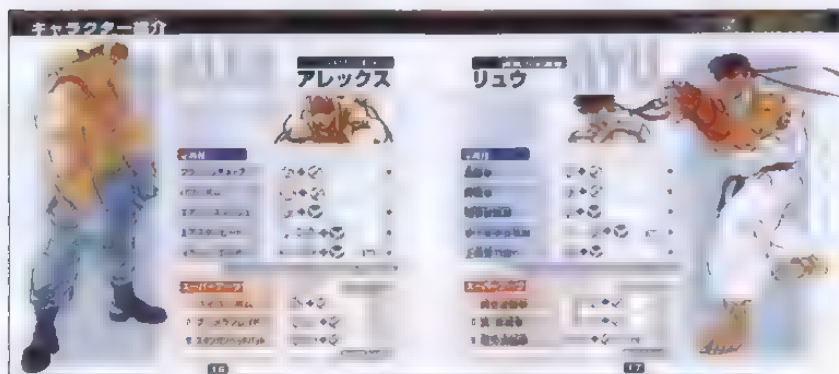
Their final production as Exxos, *Kult: The Temple Of The Flying Saucers* (known outside of Europe as *Chamber Of The Sci-Mutant Priestess*), came with perhaps their finest work yet: 'Step into KULT, Exxos demands it!' It reached a fine pitch with the offer to win a cervical cord 'NEW AND EXCITING !! WIN A CUSTOM SED CERVICAL CORD !! Yes, it's for real! Faithful Servants of Exxos Inc. have come up with a lulu A megamary holog simulation of you know who's cervical cord! Wowee! All-star SCIENTIFIC MINDS have tried their darndest to tell the difference, and failed 300%! Your (ex-) friends will grovel satisfyingly Your NEW acquaintances



Miniature comic books are surprisingly popular, though the best-known examples have to be the *Metal Gear Solid* series, which combine the games' weakness for in-jokes with a real flair for introducing the basics. The *F-Zero* comic, on the other hand, made no pretensions of instruction, preferring to present a swashbuckling tale of Captain Falcon bagging himself some alien bounties, before turning up for the *F-Zero* race and sledging his opponents. It did, at least, establish the personalities of the other racers in a way the game itself never felt the need to

will ask your advice about MILLIONS of highly intimate problems! Who could resist? All you had to do was scratch and sniff a small rectangle with a particular body part

There is one thing nearly all of these manuals share, however: they're accompaniments to games that are labours of love for their developers, desperate for players to be pulled into their worlds. Unfortunately, it's far too obvious that manuals are considered by many developers as little more than an indulgence and possibly an irritant - after all, they've just slaved over the game itself for years, and if the player's already paid, why waste time and resources on trills? But as Blizzard, Nintendo, Rockstar and countless other companies prove: letting your customer know just how much thought goes into these virtual worlds has many more benefits than just stoking the odd internet discussion. Those 20 or 30 pages of cheap, stapled paper can educate players about the potential of their new purchase, bring them into a game gently, and act as a constant companion throughout the experience. If, in the future, all games are delivered digitally, we will rue the loss of these artefacts



The clarity of *Street Fighter*'s movelists is exemplary - and *Street Fighter IV* uses exactly the same iconography. The SNES game *Home Improvement: Power Tool Pursuit* preferred to point out on a poster (no manual) that 'real men don't need instructions'

Subscribe to
Edge and get
two exclusive
T-shirts free



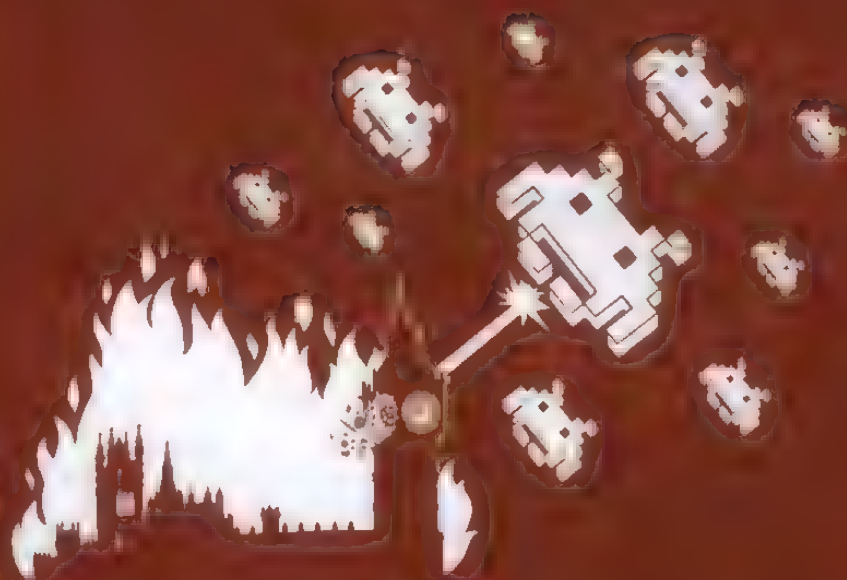
- Get two exclusive **Edge** T-Shirts – available in Medium or Large
- Save 35% off the cover price
- Pay by Direct Debit – only £9.50 per quarter
- Free delivery direct to your door
- Never miss an issue

LIVE IN THE US?

Subscribe to **Edge**, receive two free T-shirts and save yourself over \$40!

Call Toll Free: 1-800-428-3003 (ref a127)

Online: www.imsnews.com/edge-a127



ONLINE: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/edg/P127
CALL: 0844 848 2852 (quote ref P127)

You will receive 13 issues per year. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Minimum subscription term is 12 months. If at any time during the first 60 days you are dissatisfied please notify us in writing and we will refund you for all un-mailed issues. The free gift is subject to availability. In the unlikely event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to substitute with items of a similar value. Offer ends: September 25 2008. Order ref: P127. Prices for overseas subscribers can be found at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/edg

Review

Edge's most played

Alone In The Dark



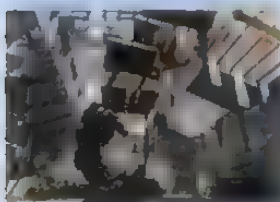
Flawed, yes. But once you've got past the clumsy controls and the odd glitch, this is still one of this year's most atmospheric and expertly paced horror experiences. 360, PC, ATARI

Space Giraffe



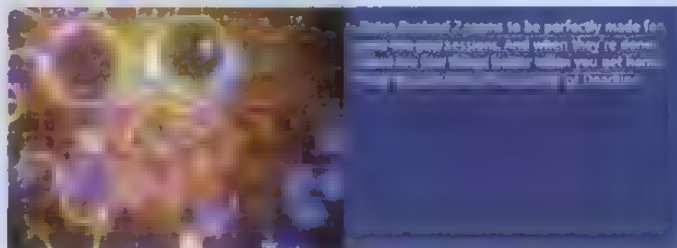
The shock of seeing a friend's high score jump by 30 million sent us straight back into practice – and another go at that infuriatingly elusive 'Long-necked long march'. XBLA, LLAMASOFT

Call Of Duty 4



A new jaunt through Infinity Ward's histrionic bullet hell proves that it still out-Clancys Clancy. But the mechanical cracks and stage curtains are definitely showing. 360, PC, PS3, ACTIVISION

A new challenger Old technology, brilliantly repurposed



Microsoft is big on co-op gaming over Xbox Live right now. Playing together, whether it involves *Fable II*'s orbs or *Gears Of War 2*'s meat-drenched servers, is most definitely 'in' this season. *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2* might not immediately seem to fit here – it is, after all, devoid of anything traditionally defined as online multiplayer. It does have something that may prove more influential than any of those other big releases, however. And it's something old. In one fell swoop, *Retro Evolved 2* has turned online leaderboards – for the majority an occasionally diverting but ultimately secondary consideration – into a white-hot competitive arena, where bragging rights are being won and lost over the course of seconds. The idea of putting on your screen the friend's high score to which you're closest is one of those masterstrokes of simplicity it makes you wonder why it hasn't always been that way.

There's so much to admire. The competition being friends seems to make the targets more attainable – or, at the very least, make you want to work hard enough to make them so. It's instantly self-sustaining and

ensures a commitment that goes far beyond the lonely furrow of the score-attack. Each defeat hurts that little bit more, each triumph means that little bit more, and every game begins and ends with a moving target. Bizarre has taken a standard part of Xbox Live furniture and repurposed it into something that embodies *Geometry Wars*' one-more-go appeal.

Alongside this competitive innovation, this issue we also look at the series that has done so much to popularise competitive gaming: *Street Fighter*. The fourth iteration may look a great deal slicker, but the ritual is as familiar as ever: each loss leads to another ¥100 coin being fished out for that inevitable – yes – one more go.

Street Fighter IV and *Retro Evolved 2*. In one case, your opponent's right next to you; in the other, they could be in bed for all you know. But both games understand that what people really enjoy about playing with their friends isn't just the bragging rights – it's the learning experience, the motivation to push a little bit harder, and the knowledge that they can see your skills increase. Then, naturally, come the bragging rights.



Street Fighter IV
COIN-OP



Too Human
360

Stalker: Clear Sky
PC

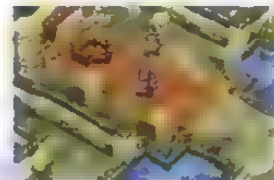
Facebreaker
XBOX 360

Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise
DS

Wario Land:
The Shake Dimension
WII

PixelJunk Eden
WII

Geometry Wars:
Retro Evolved 2
360



Dragon Quest IV
DS

Space Siege
WII

Strong Bad's Cool Game
For Attractive People:
Episode 1
XBOX 360

Siren. Blood Curse
Episodes 4-12
WII

Metal Slug 7
DS

Ratchet & Clank:
Quest For Booty
WII

Rhythm Tengoku Gold
WII

Civilization Revolution
WII

Edge



The final boss of the singleplayer game, Seth, is in the best tradition of Capcom coin-ops. That is, he's an infuriating, cheating coinsink. He does have one nuance that raises a smile – an ultra attack that KO's your character against the cabinet's screen – but otherwise is a slightly underwhelming feature.

It's been a while, but they're back. Actually, it's been more than a while. It's been a good 17 years since *Street Fighter II*, and nine years since *Street Fighter III*. In that time the 2D fighter has been somewhat marginalised, and players' expectations have changed. In this context it's a minor miracle that Yoshinori Ono and his team have not only stuck to a clear vision of how to take the series forward in 2D, but that Capcom has been able to excite people about it to such a degree.

Does it deliver? Does it ever. Visually, *Street Fighter IV* is the pinnacle of videogame reimaginings. Every original combatant is instantly recognisable, but the new level of detail has been used to characterise both appearance and fighting technique in exceptional style. Chun-Li is the embodiment of beauty and grace, her hands constantly move, and each change of stance brings a wholly different posture, while her moveset is composed of tight flourishes and flowing agility. She's instantly recognisable as an update, yes, but after a few minutes it's clear that this is without a shred of doubt the definitive version of the character. The game runs at a flawless 60fps and the animation and facial expressions are peerless: fighters follow each other's movements, change stance as they move, and when a super attack is unleashed a temporary 3D camera



Ultra attacks – available when both super and revenge meters are full – are *SFIV*'s most visually spectacular: the camera zooms into a close-up 3D view, and the move is executed in earth-shaking fashion.



change shows the (literally) eye-popping fear of your opponent in a welcome comic touch.

It's when you get your hands on the joystick, however, that it becomes clear just how special *SFIV* is. The new angle it has brought to the series is simple, but very surprising, making the depths of the fighting game accessible to almost all players. Everyone can admire the videos of



Chun-Li is the embodiment of beauty and grace; her hands constantly move, and each change of stance or movement brings a different posture

SFIII that show 15 parries in a row, or unbroken Yun combos that decimate opponents' health bars, or counter-counter supers. Very few can replicate them. *SFIII*, and to a lesser extent *SFII*, are ultimately the preserve of a tiny proportion of their total players – the frame-manipulating and combination-memorising junkies. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that – it is,

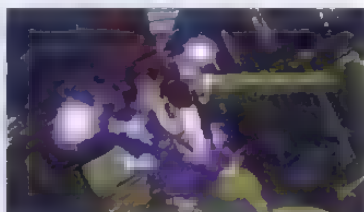
after all, why these games are still played competitively and analysed in such detail – but there is something wrong with the fact that the vast majority of players' tactics outside of this circle consist of little more than jumping kick then sweep.

SFIV addresses this in three ways. First, the frame windows for combination attacks have been greatly increased, making it much

easier to pull off short two- and three-hit attacks. *Street Fighter Alpha* tried something similar, of course, and was slightly too generous with its allowances for chain combinations – here, it's balanced perfectly to the point that a string of specific moves will work where simple button-mashing won't. It's in combination with the second major change that this comes to the fore, however: special moves are now much easier to pull off. The inputs are the same as ever, but *SFIV* is generous in its interpretation of your intentions, and much less fiddly.

It's impossible to overstate what a change this is for the series, and the fighting game in general. *Street Fighter* is now more about planning your attacks and responding to your opponent rather than worrying about whether you can physically accomplish what you want to. Never been able to pull off an EX spinning piledriver? You will now. Allied to the increased ease of combination attacks, it puts seriously damaging strings of moves within the reach of the average player and places the tactical depth that is the real genius of the series firmly within reach of all, rather than just the elite.

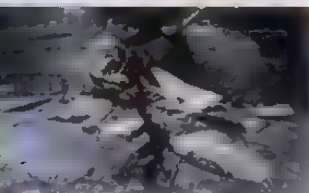
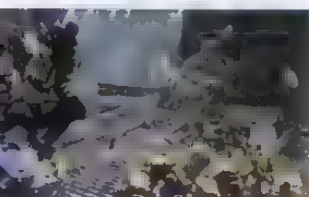
If that was all that *SFIV* had added to





TOO HUMAN

FORMAT: PC RELEASE: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: SILICON KNIGHTS
PREVIOUSLY IN: E164, E183, E192

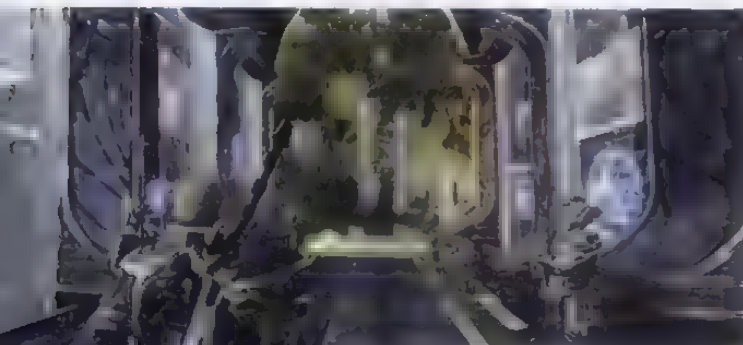


There are five different character classes to choose from, in the fairly standard aggressive, defensive, ranged and support roles. Each is more proficient with certain weapon types than others, though for the most part you're free to equip your characters as you please

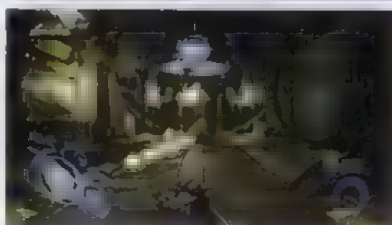
You either love it or hate it. That's what people say, isn't it? Usually in association with yeast extract, or as a mediating salve for internet discussion threads about to go supernova – blind faith forgiving a multitude of sins on the one hand and an opposing party doggedly refusing to acknowledge any sign of merit on the other. Regardless, Marmite is insufficient ointment to soothe *Too Human*'s ills. It's nothing terminal, however. 'Sickly' is more appropriate here – though for reasons that aren't immediately apparent.

For most, the compulsion to move the camera with the right stick will provide the initial annoyance. Though it could be argued that a manual camera is not entirely necessary, the fact remains that the player's constant desire to move it themselves is an itch that can never be scratched. It's made worse by the fact that, because we're so used to the right analogue shifting the view of our virtual worlds, you end up constantly attacking by accident as, under duress, you unconsciously attempt to get a better view of your surroundings or battle against a camera which stubbornly insists it knows best.

By the time you enter the final phases of the singleplayer campaign you appreciate what Silicon Knights has achieved



Your base is a cavernous arcade of stores, vacuous sets (in which much of *Too Human*'s story is played out) and over-long corridors that increase journey time longer than we're comfortable with. If only the gods had been kind enough to provide Baldur with an easily accessible map on arrival.



With two players, much of the back-breaking work is made significantly easier. Sending enemies skyward, so your partner can shoot or air-juggle with melee attacks, goes some way towards delaying the advance of elite enemies.



There's a valid reason why it's been implemented in this way, of course. Silicon Knights – rather than assigning attacking duties to the face buttons, has opted for the right stick. A combination of standing, holding and pressing it in the direction of your target sees Baldur executing automated combos to dispatch his quarry. It's an unusual system that works excellently, alleviating the tiresome dial-up combos and repetitive button stabs we've come to accept, and will

be a welcome reprieve for those of us easily hypnotised by *Diablo*'s woodpecker mouse clicks or *PSO*'s rhythmic sabre swipes.

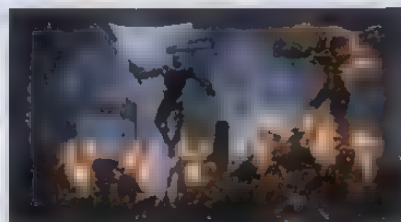
It takes a while to get used to, but by the time you enter the final phases of the singleplayer campaign (empowered by a well-stocked skill tree and weapon set) you really begin to appreciate what Silicon Knights has achieved. Combat has a grace and dynamism that few dungeon crawlers can match, and though it might not point a way forward for the genre, it certainly suggests an alternative route. It should be applauded for its bravery, no doubt about that, and those with the desire and patience to explore its subtleties, will, understandably, hold it aloft as an example of why *Too Human* is more than the sum of its parts.

Unfortunately, that desire and patience is too much of a price in the face of *Too Human*'s more tiresome elements. Chief among these are its delusions of grandeur: a story that believes it's far cleverer than it really is, coupled with loftily ambitious, gargantuan environments that, while certainly giving a sense of scale, serve only to erode even the most forgiving gamer's resolve. The dungeons can last for hours at a time, and you'd be hard pushed to find anyone who doesn't breathe a sigh of relief





Each character's Ruiner move (a last ditch blast which damages enemies around you and can knock them up into the air, providing you with much-needed breathing room) is central to combat. Defeating enemies with specific finishing moves will boost your Ruiner meter dramatically. With practice, you can call on your Ruiner time and time again, smashing through enemy ranks at great speed



As a singleplayer experience, the sheer numbers you're pitted against lends a certain nervous tension to each encounter with enemy mobs. It's not so much a case of 'Will you die?' more 'How long can you survive?'

at each location's end, as though it were some terrible burden.

For a game that requires you to replay levels time and again to salvage rare loot and accumulate skill points, it beggars belief that each dungeon needed to be so relentlessly its recycling of scenery and textures, and so miserly in its offering of distinct enemy types. Perhaps this wouldn't be so disheartening if you weren't required to walk so far and spend so long chipping away at each journey

Cyberspace, a world which exists in parallel to Baldur's, is the best example of just how unwieldy and overwrought *Too Human* can be. At intervals you're required to enter the zone to manipulate objects which have an effect on the dungeons; it's an idea popularised by so many games (*Metrod Prime 2* being the best example) but here the idea is squandered as a convoluted, completely unnecessary means of unlocking doors – further aggravating your progress

It's as though, sealed away from the rest of the world, Silicon Knights has completely lost sight of what a player naïve of the plot points and mythology, and lacking an encyclopaedic knowledge of game mechanics will ultimately experience. In some cases it's inconceivable, in others it's downright obtuse.

The irony is that many of *Too Human's* problems would not exist if another pair of human players were allowed to enter the fold (as was originally intended) – speeding up play considerably and making 'just one more run' into something a little more manageable, a little more palatable.

Project director Denis Dyack himself has stated that this is down to a matter of balance. But given *Too Human's* protracted gestation period, could this not have been addressed? Fourplayer dungeon crawlers are not after all 'that unusual' – sometimes to the detriment of 'balance', admittedly, but as anyone who has force-marched their way through *PSO's* Ruins with a full party will testify in the name of amusement this is not necessarily a bad thing. In the name of making a game significantly more enjoyable, fostering camaraderie and introducing that all-important human element, it's a necessity.

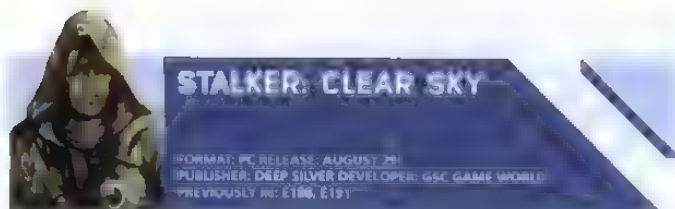
How many runs?



'A hundred times over' would be the answer. *Too Human's* Valkyrie becomes an all-too familiar sight as, every time your HP is drained, she descends to resurrect you. Sometimes she has the decency to spawn you away from a position of danger, but other times lands you in the thick of it only to return seconds later thanks to her own incompetence. During the game's more chaotic encounters, it's not unusual to watch her unskippable entrance scene six or seven times in a row – becoming increasingly agitated with each subsequent appearance. After your tenth 'demise' the sound of her orchestral death knell will haunt you for years to come.



Boss encounters prove particularly disappointing. With most, victory is simply a case of circle-strafing, whittling down your enemy's energy bars a sliver at a time. You can attempt to use your melee attacks, but the prospect of another visit from the Valkyrie will be too much to bear.

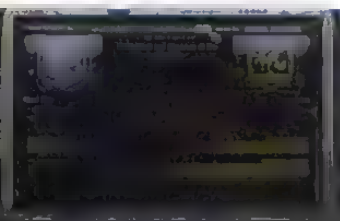


STALKER: CLEAR SKY

FORMAT: PC RELEASE: AUGUST 29
PUBLISHER: DEEP SILVER DEVELOPER: GSC GAME WORLD
PREVIOUSLY IN: £100, £191



In bringing two years of updated technology to the Zone, *Clear Sky* marks the finest use to date of Vista's maligned DirectX 10. Lightning storms now pummel player, weapon and environment, water coursing over every surface. God rays (available in lesser form in DX 9) sweep across the horizon at dawn, framing buildings and outlining trees. Warm light cascades through buildings and warms multi-layered clouds; the game still boasting the best skyboxes around. Of course, it's not everything that demands the latest hardware: the new day/night cycle transforms your time in the Zone, the nights long enough for you to forget the day, making nightvision goggles a vital early purchase.



For a price, the new guide characters will hop you between places you've already visited

Whatever. Is Unintended anomalies a chance to return to the Zone's one worth taking. *Stalker's* uncanny corner of the world, full of howling mutants, improvised creeds and dark intrigue, holds undiminished power in what is unsurprisingly, a troubled prequel.

A new character in a familiar situation you awaken in the Zone's calm south while in the north, beyond the silhouettes of towns the Chernobyl plant pumps out death and myth for the consumption of all around it. Trespassers have their brains melted and prowl the land as zombies. Explorers are burned and electrocuted by mere changes in the wind. Those brave or foolish enough to sleep are given heart attacks by their dreams. If these and other ghost stories told at great length around a great many campfires sound like your cup of tea, then you're already in love with *Clear Sky*.

A heavily revised faction war system succeeds in both overpopulating and animating the Zone from top to bottom, tracking clan resources and giving each the chance to raid and conquer its rival. Forging an alliance now, tunes you in to your clan's radio frequency, providing a background buzz of siege and defence missions you can engage at leisure. It is, in what brings out the



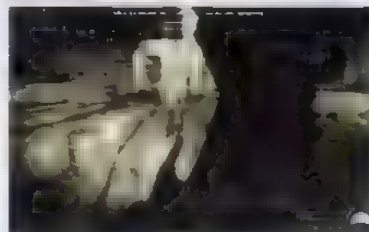
The 'dynamic music' option, mercifully off by default, triggers a cataclysmic shift, replacing the monstrous ambient score with battle-sensitive Euro-rock. As terrible a place as the Zone is, this is one sure way to make it worse.



As you trek north, the search for Strellock, the manipulative loner with a disastrous interest in Chernobyl's secrets, quickens into a frantic, ambush-ridden chase through a host of new locations. What results is a game of two distinct halves.

best of this game, just another excuse to lurk indefinitely in the Zone, bedding into its society and learning how to survive.

Still a brutally hardcore RPG, *Stalker* casually slaughters run-and-gun heroes and fatally irradiates careless ramblers. A true survival horror, it's a game about finding value in all things, turning savage into something indispensable. In *Clear Sky*, you're encouraged to repair and customise a single weapon in a world positively littered with them. Despite tweaks, your inventory again forces you to decide whether to throw away treasures or brave the Zone under load, stopping constantly for breath. And if you

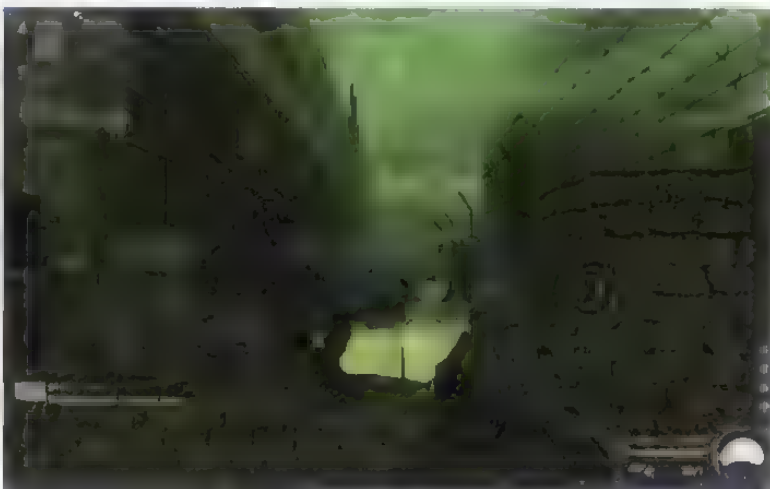


If you've never been dragon punched in the mind, you've not met this chap. Going underground is terrifying, even if it never hits the peak of the first game's poltergeist.

neglect your weapon for just a few firefight, it'll jam on the first shot as something feral leaps into your torch beam.

There lies the frustration and, to some extent, weird appeal of *Clear Sky*. Here you have a game smart enough to let you dawdle in its world before being sucked through an increasingly linear series of missions, into a black hole. Its world is second to none, so captivating and deep that its 'seamed' landscape, identical NPCs and infrequent loading screens feel entirely natural. Its combat is obsessively real. Its sense of lurking horror crushes you. Yet it's overambitious, the most noticeable bugs seeing soldiers attempt to shoot through walls, snapping wildly between idle and defensive states. A newfound love of grenades, meanwhile, makes a fierce fight of even the lowest difficulties. This is still a quiksave shooter, full of calamities that strike out of nowhere.

Clear Sky is a stunning, intoxicating portrayal of life as a post-apocalyptic vagrant, then, so long as you know where to forage. As easy to misunderstand as it is to break, it again turns the best and worst of PC gaming into something extraordinary. [7]





FACEBREAKER

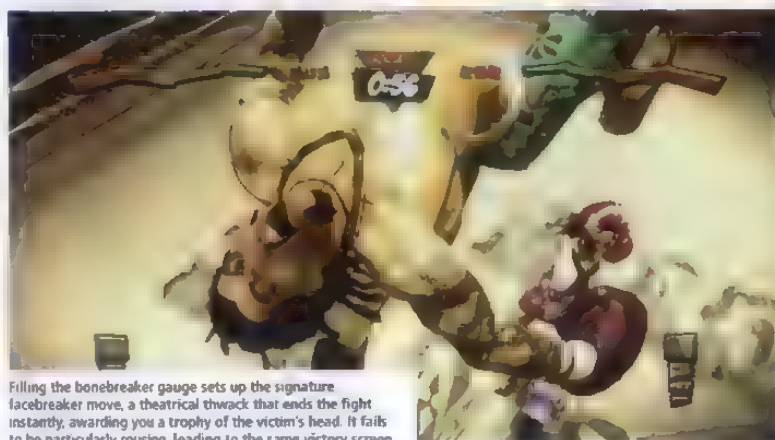
PS3 (VERSION TESTED), WII
 RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 3 (Wii), NOVEMBER 11 (Wii)
 PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: EA CANADA PREVIOUSLY WII: WII



If all was right with the world, this would be the first of two pages dedicated to *Fight Night Round 4* – a triumphant return for EA's champ. It would not refer to last year's *Def Jam Fight for Real*, because that grotesquely off-key 'rhythm brawler', which destroyed overnight one of EA's brightest series, would never have existed. And nor would *Facebreaker*, an infantile button-masher which, by its creators' former standards, is less a trip to the canvas than a journey to the centre of the Earth.

A cartoon knockabout in the vein (but certainly not the league) of *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing*, it's best described by one of its own tutorial slides in which four lines, from the face buttons of the controller, lead to a single word: 'mash'. Though that does refer to the uncomplicated task of recovering from being stunned, its slipshod attitude reverberates throughout the entire game. 'If you stun someone, beat the crap out of them' reads one tip. Fights use a brutally simple rock-paper-scissors system of guard parry, and weak and strong punches. There's also a dismissive throw, which is as remarkable as it sounds.

Fleeing reality in favour of simple Saturday-morning mayhem, *Facebreaker* misses one important point: cartoons aren't easy, they're meticulously styled and timed. This game is anything but. So rather than thuggy rap stars or artful prizefighters, we get stereotypes from a bygone age including a greasy Spanish stud called Romeo, a dynamite-strapped Russian called Moiotov,



Filling the bonebreaker gauge sets up the signature facebreaker move, a theatrical thwack that ends the fight instantly, awarding you a trophy of the victim's head. It fails to be particularly rousing, leading to the same victory screen

and a pneumatic chick in skin-tight body armour which politely parts for her chest. With this last character, the game seems so fummoxed it can't even devise any dialogue, just shallow breathing and stock acrobatics.

Far from the analogue perfection of *Fight Night's* Total Punch Control, the combat here is as disastrous a marriage as *Icon's* choice of plodding hip-hop and martial arts. Think *Killer Instinct* meets *Punch-Out* thrown together with all the grace of a hastily improvised cock fight. Tactically limited to high-flow combos and powered-up 'breaker' moves, its action becomes infuriatingly hard to read: the animation so fast as to make decisive defence impossible. 'Go for the Achilles heel',

we're told, that being a signature move expedites time and time again.

It seems unfathomable that this is *Fight Night's* stablemate (developed at EA Canada by the core *Fight Night* team). It suffers a number of tell-tale weaknesses, among them a flagrant disregard for a satisfying career mode. But while *Fight Night* and *Icon* can blame an idealistic pursuit of innovative combat, here there's no excuse, and no upshot. Full of modes with little depth beyond the menu, *Facebreaker* is vacuous: its fights without ceremony, its interface without flair and its novelties without purpose beyond titling the boards at Gamefaqs. Never mind breaking face – what emerges here is a dire need to save it. [3]

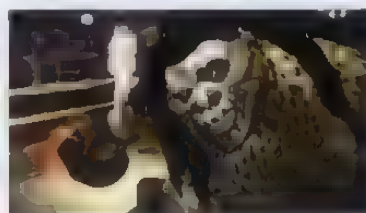


The draw for many will be the camera-enabled character generator which lets you nip, tuck and pulverise the face of your choice. Uniquely, this is as fun as it sounds, though the urge to import the face of the guy who sold you the game hangs over it entirely.

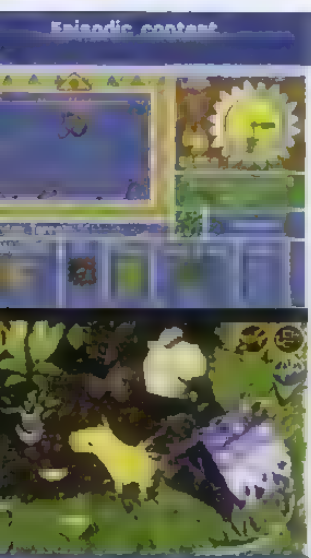
Remote Interact



Dubbed *K O Party*, the Wii version of *Facebreaker* naturally benefits from the game's skeletal combat system and clean, simple looks. Lunges of the Remote and Nunchuck throw basic punches, while buttons modify them into their different types. Earlier promises that Wii was getting a 'built from the ground up' exclusive version were somewhat exaggerated, the few differences here including an extra character and multiplayer modes. Absences, however, include online and the other versions' highlight character creation. Whatever assurances are being offered to Nintendo fight fans, few are likely to warm to an even more limited version, port or otherwise.



The obligatory precision-engineered 'EA Trax' clash horribly with the rebashed *Fight Night* frontend, rubbish character roster and casual disregard for established fighting game mechanics. Just remember that *Rumble Roses XX*, *Dead Or Alive 4* and *Def Jam Fight for New York*, all vastly superior players in the genre, are now available for a fraction of the price.



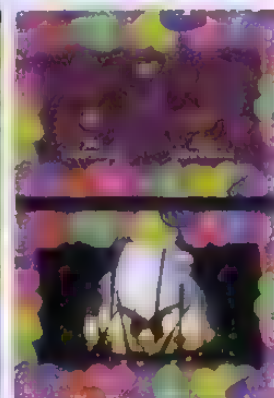
A major addition to *Pocket Paradise* comes in the form of tutorial episodes that crop up throughout the game to introduce some of the more complex concepts on offer. These present you with a sample garden and a series of challenges in a sequence that relates to a problem you'll shortly face in your own project. The solutions are completely telegraphed and simply have to be played through, but they illustrate extremely well the cues you should be looking for in your own garden – and go some way to making up for the lack of a useful tutorial at beginning of the game.



As your skill increases alongside the piñatas' rarity, their romance requirements increase. It gets a bit like a band ride, especially as they want them anew each time. You get the last laugh when selling the precious baby, though.



The piñata aren't as detailed as their 360 equivalents, but a large part of their charm is carried over thanks to the clever animation. The mating dances, meanwhile, have also been squeezed on to DS, but don't make the transition quite as well.



without loss: the piñata are bright and delightfully ruffled, and their character comes through as strongly on the small screen as it ever did on Xbox 360.

There are other distinctions between this and the original that are few but crucial: the total size of the garden is smaller, there are some extra piñata to attract to your plot and the interface (and view of the garden) has been changed to better suit the demands of the portable platform. It's the latter point that's of particular interest: the interface is a huge improvement because the game changes completely with this more tactile feel for the mundane tasks. Double-tapping on weeds, whacking a sour piñata or simply throwing four or five seeds down in combination is all of a sudden a pleasurable part of the experience rather than something that has to be worked through until you can employ workers to do it for you.

There are some little annoyances that never quite coalesce into a bigger problem. Movement, for example, is at a constant speed, which when your garden increases in size becomes tiresome. So something as simple as making the speed of movement between the touchscreen and D-pad differ even slightly, would have been welcome. It is possible to skip around by pulling out of the garden view, but constantly switching views simply in order to navigate shouldn't be necessary.

There are other improvements that prove themselves slightly lopsided. The mating minigames of the original, which became hugely annoying after a certain point of critical mass, have been jettisoned. However, there doesn't seem to be an obvious replacement for the welcome injections of



All the companions are here, and the shopkeeper is as mercenary as ever – sometimes you think the only reason you're playing is to pay their mortgages. Maybe *Animal Crossing* really has brought a hardcore edge to gardening.

gold these bring, meaning the first few hurdles of the game are spent desperately mating your stocks of piñata to sell their babies. Red in tooth and claw, and all that.

If *Pocket Paradise* makes you want to throw it against something, though, it's only because it succeeds in making gardening compulsive. It's undoubtedly found an ideal home on a platform designed for ten-minute segments of activity and attritional landscaping – and if it suffers from one or two little weeds then, well, you've just got to grit your teeth and get on with it. [7]



A dash along an iron horse locomotive helps break up the slightly familiar lava, ice and plant world themes. A scramble through a Wurlitzer-neon casino mixes things up even further



WARIO LAND: THE SHAKE DIMENSION

SEPTEMBER
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: GOOD-NEE

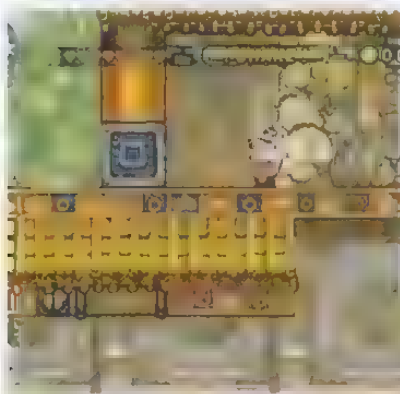
If Mario has a monopoly on boundless energy and Link on wide-eyed adventuring, then Wario claims dibs on impatience. Continuing on from *Wario Land 4* on GBA, *Shake Dimension* plays on this particular trait by dividing each stage into two phases: a greedy stretch of looting and a mad hightailing out of there as Wario inevitably triggers an alarm.

For all the theoretical frenzied snatching of the first phase, the pace is surprisingly sedate. Calmly calculating how to chain Wario's moves to propel him towards otherwise unreachable treasures couldn't seem further from the ADD-addled larks of *WarioWare's* microgames. However, while keeping tabs on Wario's catalogue of sprints, barges, stomps, slides, skids, rolls and tumbles stalls the action, actually enacting your plan requires feverish button dexterity few platformers can rival.

Hotfooting it back to the exit is far simpler, often completed in under a minute

and reliant only on maintaining momentum injected by cannons handily littering the stages. As such, each level is designed to be played in two directions, a decision that wows and confuses in equal measure. Motivated by the niches squirreled away in each stage, it's possible to slave away on solving part of a level only to discover it's intended to come into play on the trip home. This block can be broken now, that block can't, a sloppiness rare from Nintendo.

A handful of stages pull off the effect with aplomb. One laborious left-to-right struggle through a Chinese trampoline emporium becomes a frantic pinballing ricochet return, while a labyrinthine Gothic keep allows Good Feel to show off Wario's beautiful animation as he skids through the snaking interior. The sense of kinetic energy injected by Wario's hand-animated design cannot be praised enough. From the Wile E Coyote dust clouds off his hurricane legs to the Daffy Duck rage of his bulbous face,



The side-scrolling submarine sections bring back fond memories of *Super Mario Land*, but did we need three of them? Wario's tilt-controlled spaceship gets but a stingy minute of onscreen time, despite being more entertaining



Reaching this caged creature found at the end of each stage is all that's needed to get through the game, but three treasure chests and at least three bonus missions on each level are there for the completists



Tilting the Wii Remote to aim a Wario-filled cannon does a little to reinvigorate this cannon-to-cannon run, but *Donkey Kong Country* still a lot to answer for

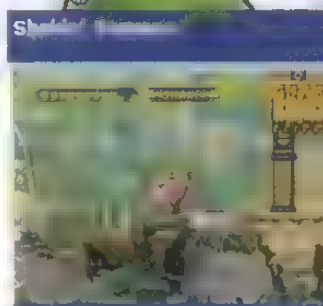
this is the most comedic realisation of the character to date.

But while Wario's physicality reaches new heights, his older habits die hard. Perhaps taking its cue from *WarioWare*, there's a ridiculous turnover of ideas that gives very few the space they need to breathe. Nintendo is famed for sprinkling around mechanics other developers would build entire games on, but here the effect is quite irritating. Shrinking machines, snowball Wario, a tilt-controlled spaceship, mine carts, flaming Wario – some appear for less than five seconds, while bombs and swing vines are regurgitated blandly throughout.

Perhaps this is part of the Wario 'joke', a parody of Mario's sublime pacing for a parody of the sublime Mario himself. Put it down to Wario's shambolic ways, however, and how do you explain the tiresome structure elsewhere that has you replaying levels to satisfy bonus criteria? Not losing health, collecting gold, killing one specific enemy – yes, they lengthen an otherwise six-hour game, but such nitpicking doesn't fit with the overall 'ah, fuggitaboutit' ethos. That your only reward for doing so is a measly sound test is more galling. Whatever happened to the everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach of *WarioWare Twisted's* 200-something bonus tinkets?

Shake is at its best when emulating the obnoxiousness and bluntness of its hero. That it occasionally bows to its stupidity is an unexpected disappointment.

[6]



What of the 'shake' dimension itself? While seizing a hapless goon and whipping him around into a shrieking blur is amusing the first few times, the Remote-shaking controls are little more than another 'flick to make something happen' setup that Wii developers seem so keen on. Lobbing objects involves tilting the Remote to aim a reticule as in *Yoshi's Island*, but so few scenarios require this move that it's rendered useless for most of the game. Shaking treasure sacks, however, and watching their golden booty spill out over the level will always satisfy – appealing to that same twisted part of the brain that has you destroying every last rock, computer and Ewok in search of *Lego Star Wars'* tinkling studs.



PIXEL JUNK EDEN

FORMAT: PS3 RELEASE: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: SCE DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES



Plant placement remains constant, no matter how many Spectra you've collected thus far. The decision to limit players to one Spectra per excursion artificially extends the length of the game in an unnecessary way.

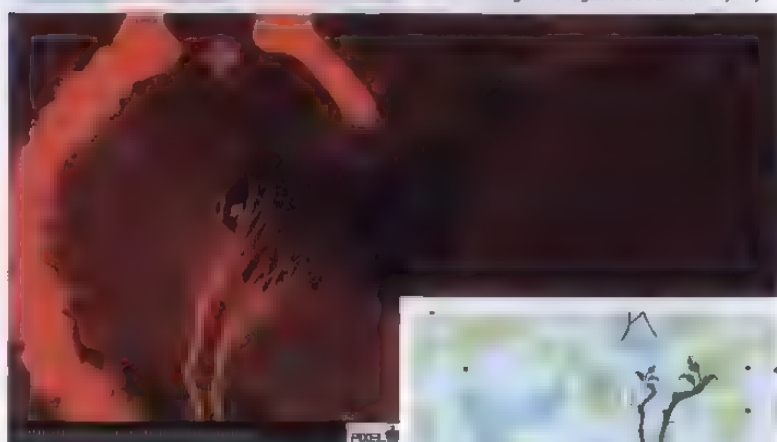


Eden's threeplayer offline-only option is a little superfluous, an extra mode that has pulled time and resources from other parts of the project for very little reward. Chief among the problems is, predictably, the camera. It strains to contain the wild momentum of its three darting subjects, before settling apparently arbitrarily on tracking just one Grimp. If a player falls offscreen then, after a couple of seconds, they will warp back into the midst of the action, but since the game often can't decide where that action is, frequently it will simply track a character's fall, bringing everyone else down with them. It's a case of more being very much less.

If the previous two *Pixel Junk* titles were Q-Games remakings of games and traditions gone before, *Monsters of Desktop*, *Tower Defense*, *Racers* of so many frenzied 8-bit top-down racers, *Pixel Junk Eden* marks the developer's first excursion into the true unknown. Sure, there are faint echoes of games past – an aiming system cribbed from *Worms*, a *Rainbow Islands* emphasis on climbing upscreen, and a proto-*LocoRoco* aesthetic – but the sum of *Eden*'s parts is a unique and soulful original.

Ten levels, or 'gardens', each presented in a flat-tone colour palette with intricate foliage silhouetted in the foreground, frame the game's overarching collection-up challenge. This comes in two tiers: the first requires you to break poison buds with your character, the *Pkmn*-esque Grimp, and harvest the hundreds of seeds released to create new shoots, which provide routes to ever-higher altitudes in the garden.

Ascension leads toward the ultimate goal: Spectra, glowing collectable objects which act like Mario's stars, returning you to the hub screen when found and opening up new gardens as the collection expands. With 50 Spectra to collect, five in each garden, there's a lot of repetition, and since the game's core interactions aren't rich enough to allow the same environments to be explored in varied



ways. *Eden* soon reveals itself to be an experience much wider than it is deep.

Q-Games' self-proclaimed vision for the *Pixel Junk* brand is 'high-quality casual gaming'. This focus is evidenced by *Eden*'s control scheme, which has been so simplified and reduced that it begins to hurt the experience. The left stick moves the Grimp with speed and precision on the horizontal axis, but multi-function mapping to X makes moving up and down screen a frequently frustrating and unintuitive experience.

PSP download play is seamless and the game's use of Sony's all-new trophy system is well-structured, inspiring players to approach it in different and inventive ways.

Actions are often performed through non-inputs: your Grimp will stick to plants automatically; a tap of the button releases his grip in a reversal of standard interactive syntax that takes a very long time to relearn. Likewise, tap the button once while standing on a plant and the Grimp will release a short string of silk that works as a kind of temporary bungee cord, allowing you to swing to gain momentum and launch yourself off at angles. But Q's decision to make the silk deployment an automatic action, with any kind of button input breaking the string, seems counterintuitive even after hours spent with the game.

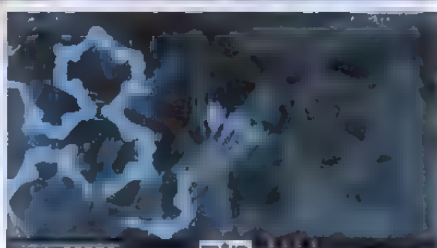
Added to the awkwardness is an auto-depleting life gauge that acts as a time limit for each excursion. While this gauge can be refilled by collecting crystals, it adds a low-level, nagging pressure that seems at odds with the gentle and leisurely atmosphere the rest of the design generates.

Eden's precise art direction, dreamlike menus and sharply contemporary Japanese ambience is a perfect fit for PSN, but for all its purity this is an *Eden* too mechanically flawed to match its presentation.

[7]



Tomohisa Kuranitsu's melancholy techno soundtrack complements the high-art visuals, an unexpectedly successful marriage of four-to-the-floor kick drums with intricately drawn flora.



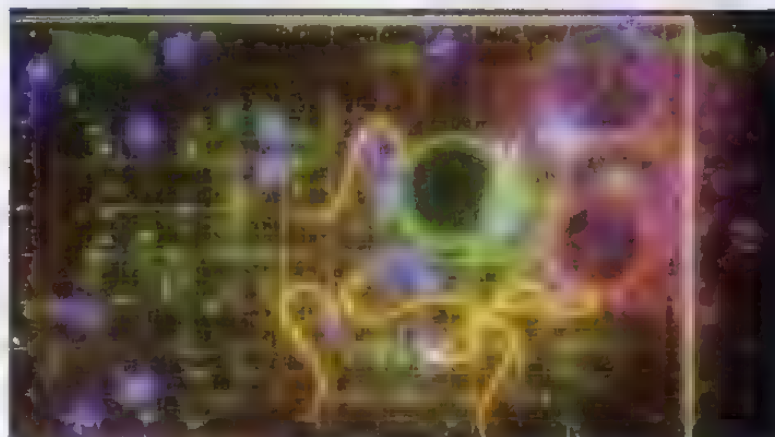
GEOMETRY WARS RETRO EVOLVED 2

RED RELEASE: DUTY ROMAN
DEVELOPER: BIZARRE CREATIONS

For three years, *Geometry Wars* has been the star of XBLA, the poster child for download gaming, and a little responsible for grinding millions of thumbstick sockets down to a fine white powder. It was *Retro Evolved* that reminded us that games don't have to be bulky to be epic, nor do they need to be brutal to be sadistic. A reminder that games could be atom-sized chunks of pure digital malevolence, flinging sound and fury at the player for less than a minute at a time.

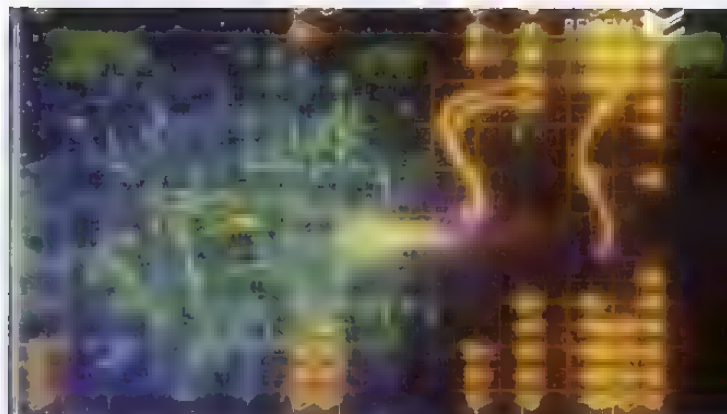
Full of bright flashes and sharp surprises, *Geometry Wars* always looked a bit like a magic trick. Now, with the release of its true sequel, it feels like one, too: even though *Retro Evolved 2* cribbs extensively from series stepchild *Galaxies* - and gives you far less to play with when all's said and done - it still manages to feel more essential in every way. It's not magic, of course. This is just the in-built judiciousness of a classic in the hands of its original creators. And in among the spark and fizz, it's that same judiciousness that may be the sequel's defining quality. Six modes would normally seem like a recipe for gimmickry with a game this simple, but Bizarre Creations refuses to descend to the level of quirky mazes or unlikely boss fights. Instead, it offers up a careful deconstruction of the game's inherent qualities, as if the original had been put through a separation chamber, with each of its individual components then sounded out for their specific potential. So alongside the classic Evolved mode and electronic chicken run of

As with the first game, the leaderboards are where the true battle is. While the path to a million points is now considerably shorter thanks to the Geoms, the game is still the vicious battleground it always was.

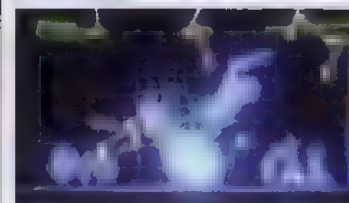
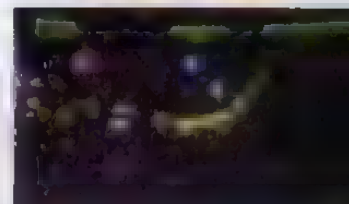


PGR4's Waves, we have *Deadline*, which gives you infinite lives but just three minutes to rack up points, *King*, which divides the map into fragile bubbles of invincibility floating in a sea of extreme vulnerability, *Pacifism*, which robs you of your guns entirely, and *Sequence*, a rousing mechanical ghost house filled with delicately weighted rooms which must be beaten one after the other. In among this are a handful of new enemies and considered thefts from earlier versions, such as the return of Geoms expelled by destroyed foes, which boost the multiplier and force you to play in a far more risky manner.

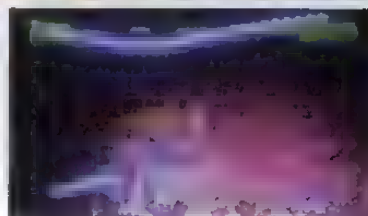
Not everyone will be happy, however. There's something slightly scandalous about



Multipayer would ride high in the list of bullet points if *Retro Evolved 2* came in a box, but the heart of the game remains a solitary endeavour, best played in a darkened room with headphones and an endless supply of tea.



This is what firework displays would look like if bonfire night were to be organised by Steven Hawking, Jackson Pollack and a manic Spirograph fanatic who'd forgotten to take his medication for the last week.



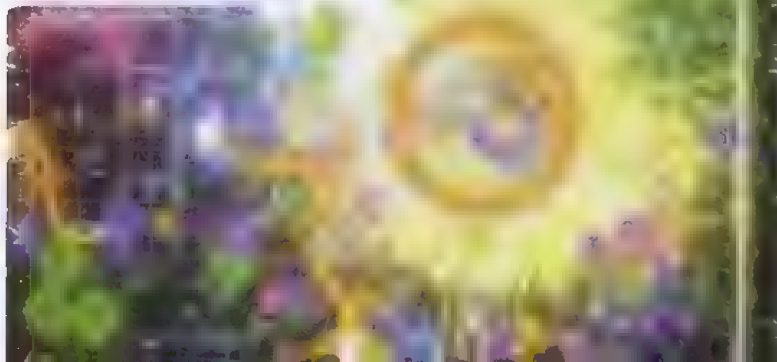
the way those Geoms allow you to rack up previously incredible scores fairly quickly, and the decision to allow you to retain your multiplier when you die means that strategic last-second smart-bombing is no longer as crucial a skill as it used to be. Equally, many will be unable to forgive the lack of online multiplayer alongside the local variety. But this final issue at least may be yet another sign of Bizarre's confident stewardship, as the slightest hint of imprecision or lag in a game as laser sharp as this would be a betrayal.

Retro Evolved 2 may refine rather than rewrite, but it also boasts the effortless self-assurance of a mini masterpiece. As a suite of strong releases suggests downloadable games are finally making good on their promise, it's only right that *Geometry Wars* should be leading the charge. It may be pulled together from no more than shards of light, but few games manage to be both a science and an art, and almost none have the power to be so cruel, and yet so kind. [9]

Cube with a view



It's one of the game's stranger inclusions: holding down the back button and the right bumper will pause the game and allow you to zoom in and out of the action, even nudging the battlefield into three dimensions. It's pure showing off on the part of the development team, of course, but it's still pleasing to see that *Geometry Wars'* frozen abstract dioramas can be every bit as involving as the battlefields of *Halo 3*. The option to save films next, please - we've got a couple of 2D machinima projects we want to get started on.





What is a pleasant return to *Dragon Quest IV* for the Japanese and US markets (if you accept the witless censored NES versions released in the US as canon) is an exciting debut in overlooked Europe. Elsewhere, the remake is surveyed for graphical and mechanical tweaking, it is the localisation itself that promises British shores a treat. For while the mechanics are well worn by subsequent *Quest* dabbling, the narrative structure remains an interesting premise to this day.

Divided into six chapters, the first four focus on four individual heroes. Think of it as the Robert Altman approach to RPGs: an ensemble cast that, in going about their own normal lives, reveal more about the world than any single uber-hero ever could. A soldier, a princess, a merchant – worlds apart and yet somehow in the same world. The variety of scenarios demanded from the average RPG are rarely so naturalistically present.

And where having five rebooted heroes (the fifth is your character, who brings the other four together) would suggest five times the RPG toil, the pace is actually slickened. The constant levelling up of five low-level grinds puts off that eventual slog to the fifth and sixth chapters, each of the earlier tales playing out to a statistical spiral that paints an exciting picture



ArtePiazza's 3D world – putting even the recent *Final Fantasy* efforts to shame – can be spun with the shoulder buttons, often revealing hidden items or characters previously obscured

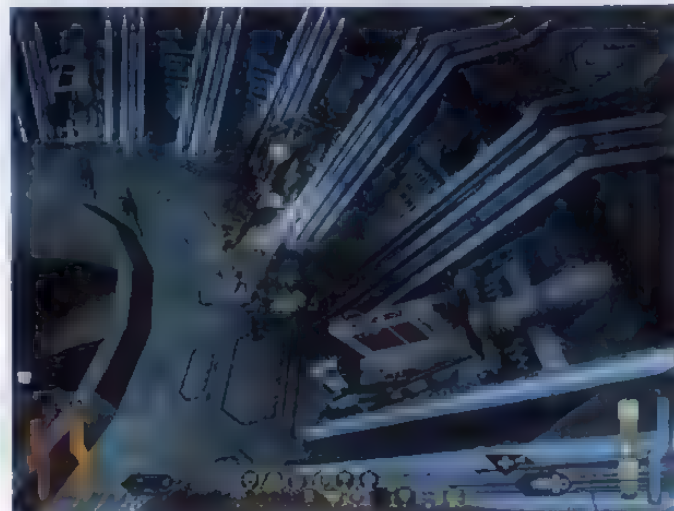
of a nation gearing up for a fight.

Additions to a title never before played are more difficult to see. Battles, in particular, remain their hoary old selves, only Toriyama's monster design receiving any love from a visual reworking.

To finally be able to understand the story, and to have it so wittily translated – some of the written dialects have to be read out loud to be understood, let alone believed – is *Dragon Quest's* *raison d'être*. [8]

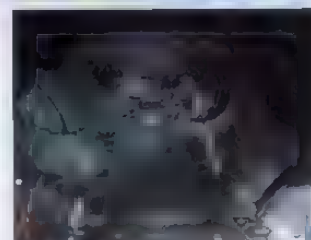


Torneko's chapter takes an interesting mercantile direction, the RPG grind joined by the daily grind of a store owner as the poor chap serves a constant stream of customers in hope of precious commission



Space *Siege* is not only hugely similar to its progenitor *Dungeon Siege*, but it also borrows thoughtlessly from umpteen successful games of the last five years. The result is a wholly unoriginal creation burdened by memories attached to the good ideas it's imitating, and made worse by the sloppy execution of basic mechanics.

Set aboard a spaceship in the near future, you're a generic space marine, charged to clear the decks of arbitrarily evil aliens using an array of guns. You collect upgrade materials that are then used to upgrade your weapon, your armour, or your mute robot sidekick. At intervals you are presented with the choice of installing a new cybernetic implant: an arm, an eye, a spine, or some legs. The choice is touted as being important, with an apparent loss of humanity if you accept the



The spaceship's architects were seemingly inspired by *Doom 3*, giving every area a grey, metallic design devoid of character. One day we may see brightly coloured spaceships

implants. But aside from slightly different available skills, there's no tangible consequence.

As you progress, you encounter greater numbers of gaming clichés. Small girls will run across corridors giggling, only to vanish when out of sight. The ship's artificial intelligence is acting suspiciously and may have ulterior motives. You listen to a lot of conveniently placed audio recordings from unseen crew members.

There's a very deliberate pattern to hack-and-slash dungeon crawlers. Monsters are killed, treasure is collected and used to buy new equipment, which in turn facilitates greater monster killing. When done right the fountains of gold, advancing levels and satisfying sounds result in a trance-like flow of satisfaction. When the sounds are forgettable, the fountains are dry and the advances are irrelevant, it's as dull as this. [4]



The use of guns in place of melee combat makes you want to circle strafe, but the controls make avoiding enemy fire awkward



STRONG BAD'S COOL GAME FOR ATTRACTIVE PEOPLE: EPISODE 1

PLATFORM: PC, PS2 RELEASE DATE: 2004
PUBLISHER: TELITALE GAMES DEVELOPER: IN-HOUSE



Though making no difference to the plot, Strong Bad can play several minigames. Series favourite retro videogame *Snake Boxer V* makes an appearance, as well as Teen Girl Squad. This is the most amusing of the bunch – a crudely drawn animation in which the aim is to kill off all of the pubescent characters in unlikely accidents

The point-and-click genre should be an easy means of transferring the wordy world of the Homestar Runner to videogame form. It's a genre that gives pre-eminence to the writing – and certainly this ensures that the cult internet animation's gentle humour is represented uncontaminated. Here is the same odd assemblage of characters, with their quaint lexical surrealism and ironically infantile ambitions. Playing as luchador bully Strong Bad, your primary motive in the game is simply to give the pepper-pot shaped Homestar a beating.

Unfortunately, Telitale Games has made a game that is painfully short on interaction. Strong Bad will happily describe the objects around him



In a cheeky jab at *Zelda*, and as if to underscore just how arbitrarily imagined the Homestar Runner universe is, Strong Bad can choose to mark new locations on his map anywhere he likes

but any more significant interaction is often limited to the one obscure instance that will advance the plot. It's perhaps a hallmark of the point-and-click adventure that such bottlenecks present themselves, but rarely do they begin with them. In the days of LucasArts' primacy in the genre, the games would bury you in items and present you with several clear avenues of investigation, multiple puzzles requiring your attention. *Strong Bad's Cool Game* barely even deigns to tell you what your objectives are, much less encourages you to care about them. Some of the hints are even misleading. Strong Bad announces that he should try to talk to Homestar even when Homestar is nowhere to be found, but the plot's significant event is to examine a bush near Marzipan's house.

Things pick up around the middle of the episode: objectives suddenly multiply, become clearer, more interesting, and the means of achieving them more coherent. But you wonder if players would have wanted to spend this amount of time loafing around the Homestar Runner universe, or whether their interaction with it is best limited to ten-minute bursts via their web-browser, perhaps while sinking a couple of Cool Ones. [4]



SIREN: BLOOD CURSE EPISODES 4-12

PLATFORM: PS2 RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 2004
PUBLISHER: ATLUS DEVELOPER: ATLUS



The story reaches extraordinary peaks of bleakness before rebounding back into happier, more hopeful territory thanks to a narrative convulsion that leaves the course of events even less clear than before

To recap on last month's review of the opening three episodes of Sony's down-poadable survival horror remake – it was very dark and unsettling, the controls were clumsy in an effective but avoidable way, and the story was confusingly told but well supported by a sharply designed interactive archive. It was scary, inexpensive and recommended: the only question was whether the game could sustain its quality over the remaining episodes.

The answer is a more or less straightforward yes. Some elements develop just as hoped. The shibito, for instance, evolve beyond their initial bleed-out zombie form into ever more gruesome insectoid mutations (David Cronenberg's *The Fly* hovers menacingly over the distended, hybrid horrors as an obvious influence), which varies play – enemies can fly and walk

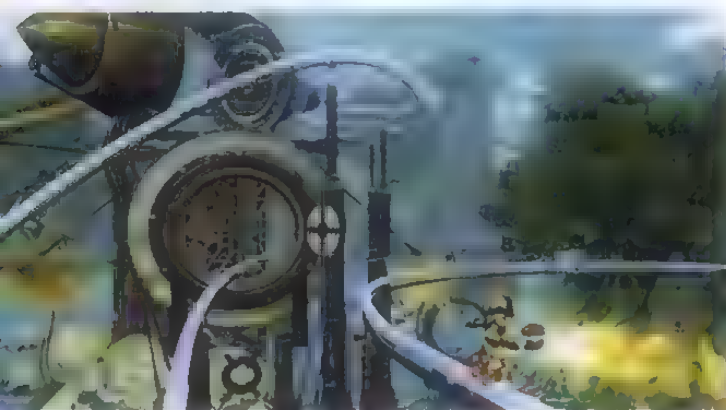
on ceilings – as well as making things generally more horrific.

Other areas are revealed to be as weak as feared. An unhappy knock-on effect of the new enemies is that, as the limits of the game are tested more fully, the flaws in the controls become more noticeable, especially during combat. With shibito no longer anchored to the ground, players may find themselves relying more heavily on the optional first-person perspective rather than the cumbersome default camera, and the resulting comparison with FPS games is unflattering.

On balance, *Siren* is still a remarkable achievement. Not the technological breakthrough Sony was initially hoping for, perhaps – the announcement of an eventual Blu-ray release signals the end of that – but it's still a very effective and, at £20 attractively priced horror game. [8]



As the later episodes increasingly move away from cramped indoor spaces, you'll rely on sightjacking less, though a new variation – sightjacking memories attached to particular objects – is used to solve puzzles



The rail grinding sections return and, just as in the previous game, redeem their lack of challenge with their sheer thrill and effortless exhilaration as you're treated to a high-speed tour of the environment

While the experience is brief – at four hours you may well finish it without leaving your seat – it's hard not to warm to *Quest For Booty's* charm. With such little time to entertain, Insomniac has stripped away every inch of slack, delivering a consistently entertaining title where platforming nestles tightly against puzzle solving and hugs shooting sections. There's barely a heartbeat between them. Everything here is concentrated into its purest elements helped by a genuinely witty and endearing script and only let down by occasional cost-cutting animation.

Mostly, though, the quality is flawless. The lush and vibrant environments are every bit the equal of the full-fat *Tools Of Destruction*. The design never fails to engage as you hop over hazards and solve amusing if simple, riddles. In fact, the lack of

hardened challenge is part of the allure. This isn't testing skill, it's simply about killing an evening and thoroughly enjoying it in the process. It's even innovative – for the series at least – introducing features such as the ability to pick up objects, smashing open doors with rocks or using glowing grubs to illuminate dark caves. Ratchet's wrench also now manipulates the environment at a distance, using an electrical tether to tilt platforms or move springboards to open up new paths.

While the UK price has yet to be decided at the time of going to press the \$15 American tag implies a cost to match *Siren's* three-episode £7 ticket. Which would make this an essential, if disposable, gaming treat. It also suggests that, if PSN can keep up this quality, it could become one of Sony's most important assets.

[8]



Puzzles break up the action, like adding drink ingredients in the right order to please a pirate. And while Ratchet is known more for his trigger finger, these simple challenges fit in seamlessly



Though it's the latest in a series that has barely changed since it began in 1996, *Metal Slug 7* still has the capacity to stimulate anticipation. The fact that the DS hardware has decent sprite-handling capacity helps, giving this portable *Metal Slug* an intensity that stands up to the authentic Neo-Geo experience. In fact, enemies and explosions routinely crowd the screen, along with *MS7's* main new introduction: showers of bonus coins. Repeatedly hitting targets now fills a gauge at the bottom of the screen which, when maxed out, causes all destroyed enemies and objects to release coins for a short period. Collected one at a time they're worth very few points, but collecting many in a continuous run racks up their individual values at an exponential rate. The result is a more rigorous focus on score attack, a feature supported by the lack of infinite continues.

There's a little slowdown, especially in the screen-filling boss encounters, but, more distressingly, *MS7* lacks the pixel-for-pixel perfection that typifies the series, with a strange scaling effect betrayed as the levels

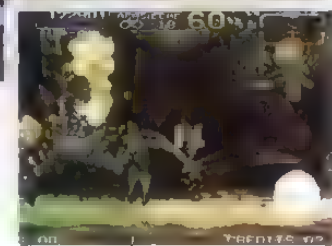
scroll by. Backgrounds, too, fail to match the detail, variety, clarity and sheer distinctiveness of many previous versions, the levels comprising a mostly uninspiring collection of caves and mountainsides rather than the vibrant cities and jungles that you might expect. Of more annoyance are the holes which can be frustratingly tricky to make out and which, naturally, send you to your doom.

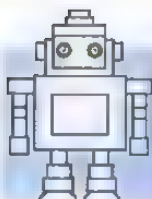
The action is wonderfully responsive, however, a necessity given the amount of ordnance thrown around. Though they were by no means unfamiliar to the previous games, here levels have a more marked tendency to be built around locked-in sections, in which all enemies must be destroyed to continue. Bad guys pile in with abandon, and with the right weapon these sections prove enormously cathartic, perfectly capturing the spirit of *Metal Slug* on the small screen. The game's seven levels may not boast the artistry and meticulousness of its forebears', but they boast action that at least equals them. As such, it's hard not to recommend coming back for more once again.

[6]



A raft of score-attack-based challenge modes set in specific sections of each level, including boss fights, melee weapons only and time attack, ensures that *MS7* will stay in your DS's slot, but they don't have the variety of those in *Metal Slug X*. It's difficult to rest on either liking the fact that SNK Playmore has resisted 'enhancing' the *Metal Slug* formula with touchscreen controls or being disappointed with the pointless scrolling level map that's displayed on it.





RHYTHM TENGOKU GOLD

FORMAT: DS RELEASE: OUT NOW (JAPAN)
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: WAKUHOUSE (R&D)

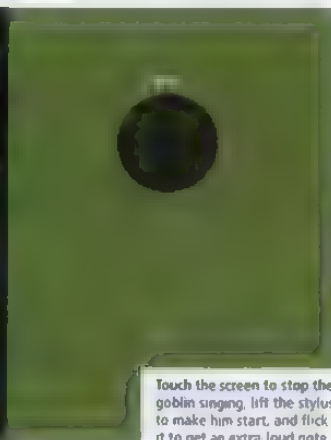
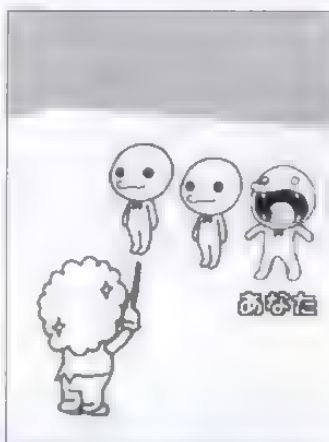
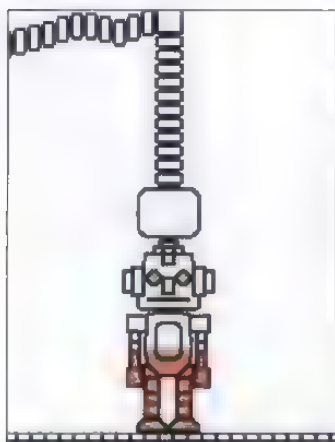
While the transition from Game Boy Advance buttons to DS stylus control made *WarioWare Touched* a far easier game than its predecessor, the same is not true of *Rhythm Tengoku Gold*. It's painfully tricky at times, and with no clear difficulty curve linking its sequence of eclectic musical minigames, there's every chance of getting bogged down by frustration at a disappointingly early stage.

The control mechanic, though, is simple and ingenious. With the console held in the vertically hinged book format, the stylus is used for a combination of tapping, holding, releasing, sliding and flicking motions that provide far more rhythmic variety than the original game could muster.

A potion-shaking production-line minigame, involving tapping to catch a

bottle, sliding to shake the contents in time with the beat, then flicking to pass it along the line, proves that the concept can work perfectly. On the other hand, a needlessly fiddly reworking of the karate round from *Rhythm Tengoku* highlights a lack of precision in the control system. Less forgivably, more than one minigame appears to rely entirely on learning from repetition rather than audio cues.

Although the relative complexity of *Gold* means it lacks the immediacy of the original, most problems can be overcome by persistence. The music is excellent, the presentation impressively polished, and the compulsion to see what bizarre scenario awaits in the next round arguably outweighs the odd moments of stylus-mapping irritation that *Rhythm Tengoku Gold* sadistically hands out. [7]



Touch the screen to stop the goblin singing, lift the stylus to make him start, and flick it to get an extra loud note



SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

FORMAT: DS RELEASE: SEPTEMBER
PUBLISHER: 2K GAMES DEVELOPER: FIRAXIS



Battles are represented in the top screen by rather underwhelming 2D animation, possibly not surprising given the numbers being crunched, but the sounds of combat are of similar standard to those on PC.

Fresh from a successful summer campaign on home consoles, *Civilization* now marches into handheld territory with a slimmed down but essentially identical version of *Revolution*, joining similar strategy-orientated franchises *Age Of Empires* and *Anno 1701* on DS.

While the 2D graphics are little more than functional, and charming cutscene footage of Carthaginian

dancing bears and the like is missing, the game's essence remains very much intact: grow an empire by achieving the right balance between economic, technological, cultural and military aspects of government.

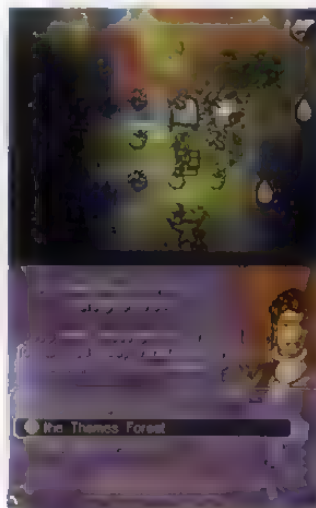
Options for the main singleplayer game, Random Map, are somewhat lacking, with difficulty level and leader being the only variables. Veterans of the PC version will baulk at both the absence of tweakability and the rapidity with which games can be completed, being a matter of a few hours rather than weeks.

However, the presence of ten different scenarios, each with a bias towards one particular area of government, bestows variety and longevity, and there's the post-release promise of competitive Game of the Week scenarios too. Fourplayer online adds further meat to the package.

The control system is as accomplished as you could wish for. Unit movement and menu navigation are controlled via the stylus, which proves a more than adequate substitute for a mouse. Only when scrolling across the world map does it feel clumsy.

In terms of distilling the core *Civilization* experience from PC to handheld, this is as most as victory as the PC-to-console iterations. [7]

Newcomers to the many concepts present in *Civilization* will be assisted by advisors, each representing a particular area of government.





TIME EXTEND

PIKMIN

PLATFORM: GAMECUBE

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO

PUBLISHER: IN-HOUSE (NINTENDO EAD)

REGION: JAPAN

RELEASE: 2001



Nintendo EAD's last new hardcore IP is now over half a decade old, but what was its greatest achievement: realtime strategy on a console, or guilt-inducing vegetables?

Peach is almost always trivial in videogames. Whether it's yours, the enemy's or innocent bystanders, the pace of action in everything from *Super Mario Bros* to *Gears Of War* ensures there's no time for reflection or regret. Exacerbated by the generally low standard of writing, the lack of sympathy for enemies and allies alike is gaming's weakest link in terms of emotional involvement.

The few times you do feel remorse for a virtual murder are therefore heightened by their rarity and unexpectedness. Although it features enforced labour and the sacrifice of countless hundreds of lives for the benefit of your lone player character, *Pikmin* was deemed family-friendly enough for a 3+ age rating. As with many of Nintendo's best titles, the apparently cheerful exterior

is no guide at all to the complexity of the content within.

The release of *Pikmin* marked something of an end of an era for Nintendo, even though it was released just a month after the launch of the GameCube hardware. In the early NES days the company was kept busy establishing its mascots and key franchises as the videogame market was reinvented following the Atari-led crash. But once created, its development – particularly in subsequent generations – was forced to split between creating other new IPs and maintaining those that had already proven their success.

There is something very different about Nintendo's new franchises from the 16- and 32bit era, though, with the majority bearing much more obvious comparison to the creations of others.

As fans ticked off the checklist of AAA Nintendo racing games, flight sims and beat 'em ups, the revelation that *Pikmin* was a realtime strategy game made far more sense than the continued reticence to create a firstperson shooter.

Whether the likes of *Command & Conquer* were ever really direct influences for designers Masamichi Abe and Shigefumi Hino has never been clear, with the most commonly quoted inspiration being Shigeru Miyamoto's love of gardening – a hobby unlikely to have preyed on the minds of too many Westwood Studios or Blizzard employees.

The verdant fields of *Pikmin*'s world allow for a typically Nintendo-style context for a normally war-torn genre. It starts with gnome-like spaceman Captain Olimar (Onima in Japan – an anagram of Mario) as if Nintendo was afraid to create



HARDCORE HERO

With Nintendo's attempts to paint *Animal Crossing City Folk* as a sop to its core fanbase having gone disastrously wrong at E3 2008, it suddenly found its hardcore credentials in the hands of the diminutive Captain Olimar. A one-sentence confirmation of *Pikmin 3*'s existence by Shigeru Miyamoto seemed to be a lot that was needed to stop a million caps lock buttons from being smashed through overseas. Absolutely nothing is known about the game yet, but the advantages offered by the Wii Remote especially in the light of the similarly strategic *Battalion Wars 2* are obvious. Obviously enough, indeed for Miyamoto to claim that the game was 'ideal' for the system even when it was still known as Revolution. Whether it is the unexpected success of its newer IPs that has caused the delay, or a more fundamental overhaul of the concept will be left for an expo other than E3 to reveal.

a new game without any, I look at its
existing punctuation, and find that
unlike a paper where down and
left turns are never seen, here they
dominate, implied by a horizon and
the range of insects, birds and fish
breathing muds where ever you go
are like nothing you've ever seen.

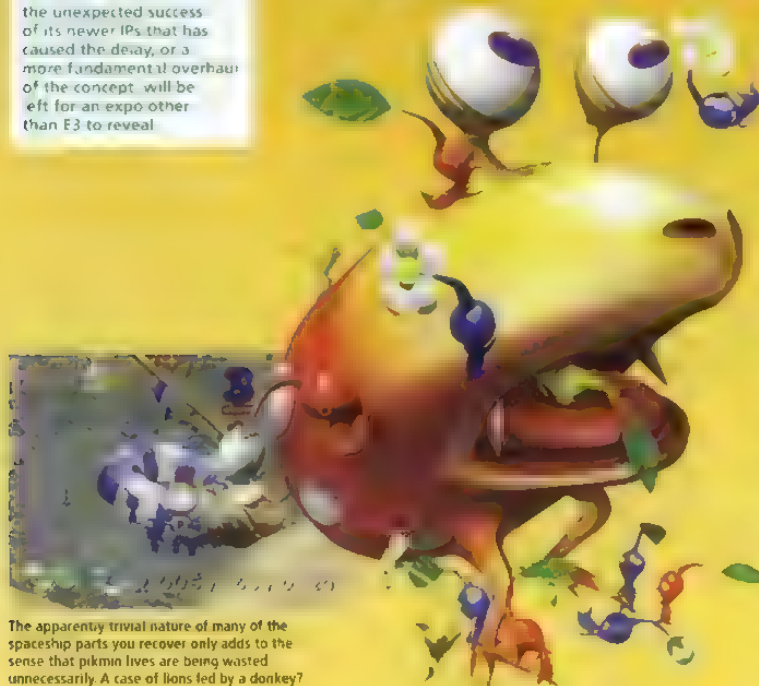
Nor indeed are the pinnate leaves apparently useless, as in the like geraniums and cacti but with a reproductive system and flower-topped antennae borrowed from the plant kingdom. Available in three different colours, the only posed reds are the strongest and in direct fire where the gilded blue and white flowers and yellow can be shown great distances and in the explosive bombards.

As the equivalent of Hydras, or Rhino tanks they seem pathetically underpowered and lacking in diversity, but the strategy in this game is not primarily that of warfare but of exploration and resource management.

The skin is a part of the armor plate
with new features, advised by biology
speaking to, "GODS & HUMANS" and
the "new" world, "God of God."

The explanation for the absence of finding the soft spots of your crashed paracet in the S.D. Program, another decision by the Oracle, does have a legitimate reason. He varies (regards) the effort to take the high his self his punishment, to drag them back to him. But thanks to the game, most controversial feature this must all be done within 30 days an in-game day lasting around 15 minutes of the entire campaign.

With his courtship, he suggests that the game is a particularly apt metaphor, despite the ergonomic difficulties, to describe the process of negotiating the conceptual and control differences between the two systems. However, distinctive needs and circumstances may be the game's all-too-common, and sometimes fatal, strategy and, as such, the hybrid-based errors are doomed to compromise Basic movement work's use enough with a single button.



The apparently trivial nature of many of the spaceship parts you recover only adds to the sense that pikmin lives are being wasted unnecessarily. A case of lions led by a donkey?

to throw pain and anxiety to each other, but organizing your trouble into different parts is an impressive act.

What could be achieved with a single wave of a new system? It can be replicated by describing the whole group so that they form into separate squads of the coloured pinnies, selecting a precise position relative to each other to achieve a desired formation at the priority defined in the tactical envelope of those you intended. This solves some of these problems but at the cost of involving far more additional ball carriers and certain that the original team was wrong, really low.

However, what would not have been easy to forgive were the ordering around tanks and helicopters seems perfectly reasonable from the perspective of the simple-minded patriot. The aerial path-finding artificial intelligence appears almost purposefully poor, but even a context no smarter game possesses watching confused plinking get lost or stuck behind scenery engenders only further sympathy to the pig.

Beyond the controls and the usual genre associations is the emotional attachment to your charges, which is the game's greatest achievement. Rather than opt for the easy route of Pixar-style gormlessness, the visual design particularly the eerily blinking eyes is almost as creepy as it is appealing, reflecting their art of Pixar games as they did *Heavy*, albeit with the trampoline foot as you weave them around Otar and to the Clockwork totem, ensuring their initial appeal.

The red sympathy, though, comes from the constant blood drop (p. 27), sacrifices for selfish quest demands of your overly loyal helpers. When continuing up to 100 pikmin at a time, casualties are impossible to avoid. Pikmin will die in the service of your aims, as every other participant of the paret is out to get them, and the environment is hostile. The mourning wa of each deceased pikmin is accompanied by a sullen ghostly spectre floating up the screen. Its accusatory look giving no indication that it forfeited its life willingly.

Death by ingestion is the fate of many pikmin, with larger enemies able to chew mouthfuls of hapless helpers at a time. Olimar himself is rarely targeted



MARKETING OF LOVE

Although only a mild hit by most Nintendo standards (around 1.5m copies sold worldwide), in Japan the pikmin are just as likely to be recognised as popstars as they are videogame characters. The song *Aino Uta* (Song of Love) by the band Strawberry Flower was used in Japanese adverts for the game and went on to become a significant chart hit. Although featured in *Pikmin 2*, it was not in the original game and many Japanese were apparently unaware that it was a tie-in although the translated lyrics clearly refer to the pikmin's willing subservience to Captain Olimar.

In the west, the tune and single are largely unknown, with the only equivalent marketing exercise being a promotion with S&G Flowers USA to rename the plant *Bacopa Cabana* as The Pikmin Flower.

Ultimately, the game is

as much a fight against nature as it is the environment, you need to preserve pikmin not so much a matter of resource management as of a strong desire for them not to give up their lives needlessly.

Making you feel anything for your own player character is difficult enough for most games, even and especially those a fraction as wordy as *Metroid* and *Darklink*, trees, but here the empathy between you and your allies is established with a strength to rival any other storytelling medium. And yet at the same time your sympathies for your ant-like avatar are often neutral at best, as it hears unexpected comparisons to *Shadow of the Colossus* and its equally sympathetic giants.

Apart from the occasional crude orchestral theme, the pikmin tracks are relatively minor. The story makes a short and slightly repetitive but damnably real path out of the game in the final few days. Retrying the last couple of parts requires a use of the save system and micromanagement that is a little evidence

anywhere else in the game, but just as it begins to evolve and expand, its ascension is cut short by the story's end.

Visually, the game remains one of Nintendo's few attempts at photorealism, at least a hint of it, in the drops. Despite the low resolution and coarse textures, it's still an effort that stands up to day, with the eaty greens and darkened caves evoking a palpable sense of dystic danger. As shadows from trees and bushes fall upon the ground and the peace of nature splatters and the implied vastness of the world makes exploration an oft-rewarded pleasure – and one of the main reasons the time I met it was so resented.

And yet, despite all this, *Pikmin* has already taken its place in history merely as the flawed beginning which allows *Pikmin 2* to make all of its refinements most improved. *Pikmin 2* is primarily because the 2004 follow-up no longer improves any and of time, although as ever with such changes, gamers agonise at the prospect that they'll get a fairly familiar sense of pace and style

which the original's limitations forced upon them.

The minor changes are certainly no less an improvement than you would expect, though the addition of a few spaceman Louie's certainly welcome, not only because of the new multiplayer modes he enables but because working characters ensures that controlling different groups of pikmin by a single player is that much easier – or at least more precise.

Although its future does appear to be secured (see *Hardcore Hero*), it's hard to imagine Nintendo eating the original game in today's environment. Neither accessible enough for the casual market nor basic enough for the traditional hardcore. Olimar never seemed destined to stand on equal footing with Mario Link or even Samus. That the game did not encourage a new god rush of real-time strategy titles on consoles is no surprise, but it's certainly to be regretted that its lessons in compassion and sympathy for virtual souls still does, in needed.



NARC

THE MAKING OF... **NARC**

Revolutionary technology helped NARC bring the war on drugs to arcades – but did we all end up hooked on HD?

NARC NA - FORMAT COIN-OP MANUFACTURER WILLIAMS DEVELOPER IN-HOUSE ORIGIN US RELEASE 1988



There aren't too many games whose designers have nearly had their heads torn off by a pit bull, but *NARC* was nearly one. "That was the one time I was scared shitless," laughs Eugene Jarvis, reminiscing from the relative safety of his office at Raw Thrills in Skokie, Illinois. "Get two pit bulls in the studio and they'd start going nuts. The cage starts jumping around and they egg each other on. They'd wander over to the camera

and you'd look at their head and think: 'That's big. That thing could bite my arm off.'"

If Miyamoto is the Spielberg of videogames, then Eugene Jarvis is John Carpenter. In the days when most designers were lost in their mazes, early Jarvis productions—*Defender* and *Robotron: 2084*—stood out as clever and unrelenting, with more room for satire than sentiment. In the late '80s, he turned his attention away from science fiction and towards a

vivid present of strip joints, drug dealers and vigilantes who stalked the mean streets dealing justice out of a bazooka. This kind of game would require a different treatment to the stylised neon graphics Jarvis tended to employ. A groundbreaking project, it would use real actors, real pit bulls, and even hi-def screens.

NARC marked the designer's return to an industry he had left after the crash of 1983. "Everyone was burnt out in the mid '80s," he

"We used high resolutions and thought there would never be another standard-resolution game," says Jarvis. "At the same time Double Dragon 2 was out. They'd just used a bigger screen, and everybody loved it!"



JUST SAY NO

In 2005, Midway released a new version of *NARC* for PS2 and Xbox—so new, in fact, that it had practically nothing to do with the earlier game. The big idea this time around was that you could take drugs yourself, leading to benefits like improved accuracy (which we're told doesn't work in real life). Jarvis was unimpressed. "I was disappointed. The dirty cop thing was trying to capture the *GTA* feel—'Now I'm doing drugs! This is so shocking!' I wanted to see Max Force and Hit Man and see some cool action, but this was just a blank slate. It was trying to be edgy but it wasn't convincing—it was like John Wayne being a bad guy or Clint Eastwood becoming a porn star." The game did not sell well.

recalls. "Was the whole thing just another fad? Was it disco? You write a one-hit wonder but you don't want to hang around the club when you're pushing 40."

Jarvis couldn't stay away for long, however, and in 1986, after getting an MBA from Stanford, the promise of new graphical breakthroughs lured him back to the world of ROM boards and coin slots. "As games got better, the amount of animation increased," he explains. "You needed armies of animators. And Japanese animators were just destroying us. I was wondering what other techniques we could use." That's when Jarvis discovered digitised video. "Here was this new technology that could revolutionise the industry. Rather than contrived cartoons, suddenly we could tap the emotion of real humans. I don't need 3,000 people creating every pixel, just actors and a green screen, and then I can do loads of animation every day."

Given the colourful treatment of *NARC*'s war on drugs, it's surprising to learn that Jarvis's thematic inspiration was surprisingly raw. "I had some close friends who went down the path

of drug addiction. I saw the devastation. There was this frustration: how to combat drugs without eliminating everybody's civil liberties?" In response, he created a violent fantasy, in which players could take on the roles of vigilantes Max Force and Hit Man and clean up the streets single-handedly, eventually wiping out the kingpin, Mr Big.

As these names might suggest, *NARC* was never meant to be *The Wire*. Typically for Jarvis, the game would be deliriously violent, with RPGs blowing enemies into wet red chunks, and killer downs slicing people up with machetes. Featuring driving sections, bosses and dozens of onscreen characters, it was a huge project, and the exotic 32bit processors and HD monitors meant the team was taking a lot of pricey risks with unproven hardware. "The technology was expensive, deadpans Jarvis, "but Williams was willing to roll the dice. Their

looked great and some days you got nothing." Even with the cameras rolling, there was a learning curve ahead, particularly for a group of designers who had never worked in the film industry. "We learnt all the lessons of Hollywood. Lighting was the big one: light a character from the front and he's flat and white. Put him in a videogame and he looked like a pancake." Eventually, the team resorted to raiding the kitchen. "We ended up putting white flour on the fronts of the pants so the top of the wrinkle

"Dancers were the best because they had control. The worst were the weightlifters: you get Rambo in and he's stiff as a board"

videogame business had gone to zero; this was their shot at getting back in."

Jarvis led a team of about seven. "They were young and inexperienced. But with that you get the passion and desire to do something cool. They're like the rock band who've just formed and will play anywhere." Naturally, they made mistakes, particularly where the HD visuals were concerned. "We did some pretty stupid things," says Jarvis. "We used 256 colours per character, and we found out later 64 would have been fine: you couldn't tell the difference. We fell in love with the technology and got carried away."

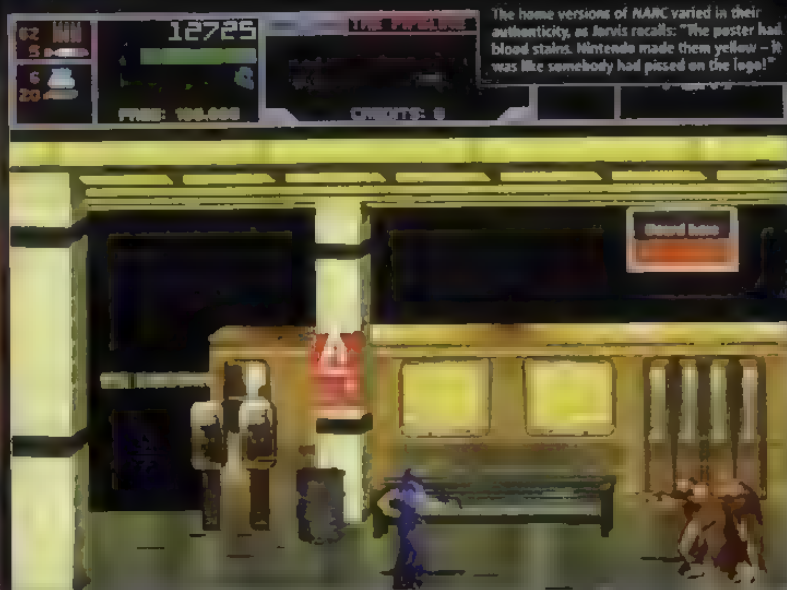
Capturing digital footage was trickier than expected. "We built the digitising equipment ourselves, and the technology was kind of balky. Some days it

would be white. All of sudden the dimensionality was really cool. Once you worked everything out—light from the side, put the actors on treadmills—it started working."

The shooting took place in the team's studio, which for a month became home to junkies, murderers and, of course, the pit bulls. "We used everybody, from the guy working down the hallway to professional actors and models," laughs Jarvis. "Dancers were the best people because they had control. The worst were weightlifters: you get Rambo in and he's stiff as a board." Throughout all the problems, it was the knowledge that they were on to something special that drove the team forwards. "You could just see this business of using live actors and animals was going to be really cool," enthuses Jarvis.

Say no to drugs; say yes to stubble: Jarvis in 1988 at the release of *NARC*. The dev team also included Larry DeMar, who'd worked on *Robotron*





NARC was a hit, its HD display and digitised graphics attracting a lot of attention. The animation was more sophisticated than anything other games could offer, and the insane gameplay made the cabinet a real spectacle. While there was some controversy over the violence, it was nothing the team wasn't expecting. "Someone wrote that it was a surrealistic nightmare," says Jarvis, with understandable pride. "We got press, but by cloaking the whole experience in justice, we got away with a lot."

NARC may not be as timeless as *Robotron* or *Defender*, but the Jarvis trademark of crowds of onscreen enemies gives the game a lasting visual appeal, and the crush of bodies feeds into the gameplay. "Like *Robotron*, every little thing has its own agenda," explains Jarvis. "In *NARC*, some enemies want to seek you out, some are trying to get drugs, some want to drop bombs; they all have different goals. If you can get five or six varying agendas out there, you get a rich ecosystem that's different every time."

NARC also provides a snapshot of the videogame business going through a transition. "It was a paradigm shift from the one-coin marathon to the idea of continuing, where people would unload money to get further," explains Jarvis. "Suddenly you get bosses to provide a barrier. You say: 'We need to take \$3 from the guy right now!' It's a commercial artform, so the game was just a minefield. When people finish this kind of game, they move on; we

wanted them to spend hundreds of dollars to get to the end."

Central to the financial imperative was the boss, Mr Big, a gigantic jowly head who is somehow able to manage a drug cartel despite not having any hands to speak of. "That sequence was just amazing," raves Jarvis. "You shoot the guy's head, then you shoot his tongue, his head blows off and you shoot his skull. There's spinal vertebrae and the head's bobbing around. It's an amazing piece of programming by Todd Allen. There's a science to it. You shoot out the vertebrae, and have to get in the right shot as he opens his mouth: it's a richer boss than most were."

Jarvis rates *NARC* in his personal top five, which means it's on a par with *Smash TV*, but not quite up to the standards of *Robotron* or *Defender*. "It was a very beautiful game. People hadn't seen anything like this before. That's the neat thing about videogames. When *Doom* first came out, it was: 'Oh my God, I'm in this whole new world!' It's getting harder, and we're more jaded, but there's always room for something new."

Despite the game's success, digitised graphics enjoyed only a few years of popularity before being superseded by polygons. After completing his next game, *Smash TV* (a prescient classic in which people slaughter each other in the hope of winning toasters), Jarvis left Williams, which had become Midway following an acquisition. "The company was screwed up, like their worst

competitor had staffed the upper management. The guys they hired could not have done a better job of destroying everything. A guy with no knowledge about videogames says: 'What's wrong with this company is we need more schedules and managers'."

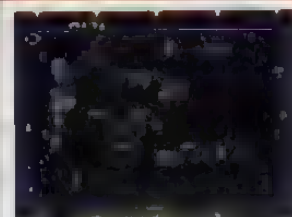
A rarity among top-tier designers, Jarvis is still working in arcade games today - his company Raw Thrills makes the *Big Buck Hunter* series and *The Fast And The Furious* games. "It's going pretty well, but arcades today is a niche business," admits Jarvis.

"You have to find your place in the world. I think I have a feel for the arcade scene and a game that's more of an instant gratification thing, where you don't spend five hours earning the steering wheel of your car. There's something beautiful about arcades. You can't just be the third guy doing GTA, you have to find a spot where you can do something cool yourself."

That's something Jarvis should understand, because for a large portion of the industry's history he was on a spectacular hot streak. When asked why he managed to be in sync with his audience for so long, he answers immediately:

"I was the average player. If you're a great player, it's much harder to be a great designer, because you can't relate to the average person. I was my own audience, so what I thought was cool, everybody else thought was cool." Jarvis sighs.

"It's like when you listen to that song and think: 'That's what I'm thinking!' Back then I was in the audience and on the stage at the same time."



ROBOTRON: 2085

As the father of the twin-stick shooter, Jarvis is impressed by the genre's resurgence on the download scene - and toys with the idea of getting back in himself. "I've always wanted to do the new *Robotron*. It's always been a fantasy of mine, and I guess many other designers have had the same fantasy. And they've done some nice stuff. I always think it should take it into 3D, but it would obviously be a very different game. There's a beauty to the trapped-on-one-screen shooter: it's a pure simulation game; you can see everything that's happening in this universe. It's like a chess board; you have perfect information, and there are no excuses. There's something really simple and beautiful about that, and once you go into a 3D world, you've lost that. The 3D *Tetris*, the 3D *Pac-Man*, it just never works out."



Codeshop

Tracking developments in development

Support structures

Sony isn't just about making consoles and games. It also spends time and money helping other coders get the most out of its hardware



It can be hard to pinpoint how gradual day-to-day changes build up into something more significant. But at least when it comes to game consoles, there's the discontinuity of the individual hardware releases to throw back some relief. Personal longevity also helps, and as one of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's longest-serving employees, Paul Holman, now vice president of

technology, has had one of the best seats in the house over the past decade.

"When we started out with developer support, as we were called in the days of PlayStation 1, we were just dealing with the UK and France. There were very few developers anywhere else," he recalls.

Back then, PlayStation's so-called PAL territories were considered something of a backwater compared to Sony's Japanese R&D heartland and the business- and marketing-savvy North American market.

Now, however, Sony's London headquarters looks after an area bigger than the British Empire at its peak. As well as several dozen European countries, including the fast-growing eastern region, there's the booming Gulf market, India, Australia and New Zealand. Of course, this has had a huge impact in terms of the consumer side of the

business with PAL territories comparable to the US in terms of installed base for PlayStation 2 and PSP. And PAL is already the biggest PlayStation 3 market.

This strength is also reflected in the geographical spread and number of developers Holman and his 60-strong team – now operating under the title SCEE R&D and Developer Support Services – have to look after.

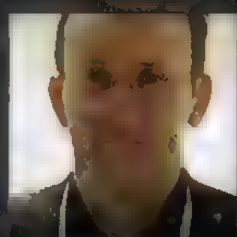
At the company's recent DevStation conference in London, for example, approximately 500 developers were in attendance, from 22 countries. It would have been 23 but the Australians missed their flight – no matter, since SCEE runs regular developer days down under, and most recently held its first Indian event too, something that looks certain to become a regular occurrence. Through various quirks of culture and history, SCEE also gets to look after the very active Shanghai development scene – and with the likes of Ubisoft and Epic in the region, plus all of the local studios, that adds up to plenty to do.

But it's not just the extent of the travel that's a significant change.

Holman says the sort of assistance developers expect from a console manufacturer has changed since the days of the first PlayStation.

"People's expectations have gone up massively," he says. "In the early days, studios would only give us limited access to their games, whereas now we can get source code. For example, there are three games we're currently helping out on where we have access to the developers' Perforce [revision control software] repository. People hit a wall. They can get more performance out of the PlayStation 3 but don't know how. We can help them with the information from the performance analysers in the devkits, but there's nothing like being able to look at a piece of code."

"I think with the rise of things like outsourcing, studios are much more comfortable in terms of opening up and working closely with us, especially on the

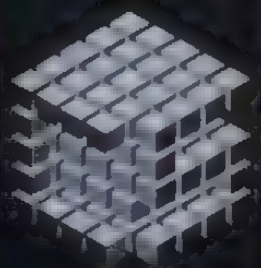


Paul Holman, vice president of technology, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe





One of the first games to use PhyreEngine was the PSN game *Flow*



bigger titles, and that's something we're obviously trying to focus on.

Equally, Sony as a company has had to adapt to reflect those changes, as Holman explains: "I think we're a learning machine. We've dealt with PlayStation 1 and PlayStation 2 and we've tried to take on board that developers require a variety of support. Also what's happened is we've developed more trust with our Japanese counterparts so within Sony we've changed our approach. With PlayStation 3, everything was developed in Tokyo and the regions just did support. But over time, as a company, you want to build up talent everywhere and not be limited by geography, and therefore the R&D work has been decentralised. Sony Japan funds research-and-development teams in each region, and the fact we do R&D as well as support is reflected in our new name."

Aside from the wholly owned, Bristol-based SN Systems, which ships the standard programming and development tools for all Sony hardware, Sony Europe's R&D activity covers some significant areas, too. One such initiative is the MultiStream audio engine, which is integrated into the PlayStation 3 SDK, and deals with how audio and effects play on



with source code) that's freely available for any licensed PlayStation developers to use to make games, but the terms they can use it under are about as open source as you can get, within the restrictions of being a licensed Sony developer. So long as you don't pretend you wrote it or give it to people you shouldn't, you can do pretty much what you like with it.

"It did take some time to get our



Held on the South Bank, London, DevStation 06 was attended by around 500 developers from 22 countries

It's perhaps the most obvious demonstration of how much has changed in game development

a console that does not contain dedicated audio hardware.

Another, more radical London-developed technology is PhyreEngine. A free graphics engine for the development of both PlayStation 3 and PC games, it's perhaps the most obvious demonstration of how much has changed in game development over the past decade. Not only has Sony developed an engine (which is provided

corporate minds around the concept, Holman says. "We were thinking about what we should provide. In the first PlayStation 3 SDK there was a very low-level library called libGCM, and there was the higher-level OpenGL ES approach, so the idea was to provide people with different options, because with PlayStation 1 we started off with fairly high-level libraries, while PS2 was very low-level

so then people wanted higher access to fill the gap. This time there was a more iterative process."

As for the future of PlayStation 3 support, Holman says it's all about providing stability. "There will be more features rolled out for the PlayStation Network, but offline it's about squeezing out more efficiency from the hardware," he explains.

And aside from technology, there will always be the inexorable rise of the number of developers to be dealt with. From London to Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Stockholm, Kiev, Mumbai, Hong Kong, Melbourne, and beyond, someone is collecting the air miles.

Driving the PhyreEngine

According to Holman, one of the trickiest parts of coming up with PhyreEngine was positioning it in relation to the technology being offered by commercial middleware companies such as Epic, Emergent and Tringy.

"With PlayStation 3, there's quite a wide range of middleware available," he says. "The advantage for the middleware companies is that they are truly crossplatform and support PlayStation, Xbox and Wii, and you have commercial levels of support. But I think we can provide something, especially for the smaller development teams who want to skip the learning curve and get a platform that they can build on."

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, PhyreEngine has been particularly enthusiastically adopted by developers of downloadable PSN games, notably *Flow* and *GripShift*.

One of the other neat things about PhyreEngine is that its PC support means developers can easily integrate it into their existing development tools, and, if they want to, even extend it to work with Xbox 360. "We don't have Xbox devkits, so we decided to target PS3 and PC, which makes it relatively easy for people to go multiplatform while the licensing agreement, which is quite different from other parts of our SDK, allows people to commercially use it too," Holman points out.

As for whether it will ever morph into an XNA-type technology that could be opened up for consumers, Holman says there's nothing planned as yet. "We've talked about it, but to begin with we want to just focus on PlayStation 3 licensees and on a general solution," he says. "Maybe over time, it would certainly be useful for people who want more general access on PCs, but that's not our goal at the moment."

Studio profile

Like Top Trumps, but for game dev.

■ **NAME:** Codemasters Studios Sdn Bhd

■ **DATE FOUNDED:** June 5 2006

■ **NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 76

■ **WEBSITE:** www.codemasters.com.my



■ **URL:** www.codemasters.com.my

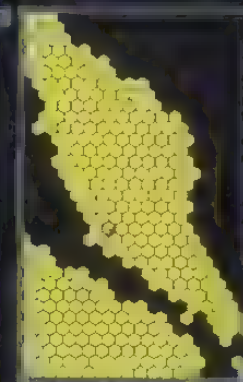
■ **CONTACT:** info@codemasters.com.my



The Malaysian studio is hard at work on railway FPS Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising (top), but the



codemasters



■ **LOCATION:**
Kuala Lumpur,
Malaysia

■ **CURRENT PROJECTS:**
Operation Flashpoint 2:
Dragon Rising; Jumpgate
plus two unannounced
console and PC titles

■ ABOUT THE STUDIO

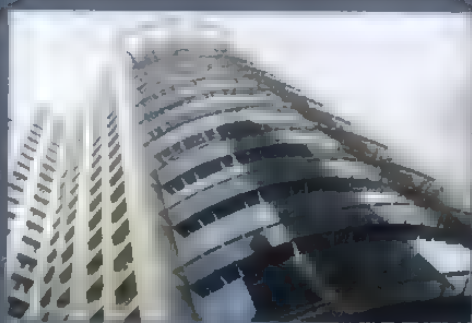
The Malaysian studio was founded in June 2006 to tap into the regional skill base and to turn raw talent into a world-class development studio. What started out as an art game development studio with 30 production staff has grown to more than double the size with the technical competencies, content-creation skills and human resource base required to develop console games. Our team has successfully worked on a number of AAA titles with strong support from Codemasters studios UK providing processes and knowhow only a company with 25 years in gaming would have.

Our philosophy is simple: to develop future

intellectual pursuits by understanding the work created by notable industry leaders. All this is done while retaining what is true to us, our Asian culture and values. This brings a unique mix to the Codemasters family, being a truly global game development company.

It wasn't easy starting a studio from scratch, but it's still in its infancy. But so far, we have taken the right steps and have the right talents. As such, the studio will strive to remain the standard-bearer.

"How did we do it? By..."



YOU THINK YOU KNOW US?



THINK AGAIN.

With a well-deserved reputation for bringing excellent and innovative games to all types of players from all over the world, and a massive investment into developing powerful new technology... there's never been a better time to play at Codemasters!

With over 60 no.1 titles in the trophy cabinet, and more to come... we're a leading force in the games industry. Be it action, fantasy, driving or war-based gaming... there's something for everyone. Combine all of this with Codemasters Studio's powerful EGO™ Engine technology and we are making a whole new unstoppable generation of games.

So, with our investment in people, technology and quality, it means that we are built to win! If you want to be part of the fastest growing studio in the UK, take a look at the many positions available.

to find out more go to:
www.codemasters.com

or email:
TheEdge@codemasters.com



codemasters™

©2008 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All rights reserved. "Codemasters" is a registered trademark owned by Codemasters and the Codemasters logo is a trademark of Codemasters.

realtime worlds

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY | Unreal® Engine™ 3
AND REVOLUTIONARY IN-HOUSE TOOLS

PROFESSIONAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT
EXCELLENT QUALITY OF LIFE

WE ARE EXPANDING OUR TEAMS

- Vice President of Online Operations (Based in US)
- Marketing Manager (Based in US)
- Senior Financial Controller
- Director of Development
- Web Development Lead
- Senior / GIS Engineer
- Senior Software Engineer
- Software Engineer
- Microsoft SQL Server Programmer
- AI Programmer
- Tools and Technology Software Engineer
- Build Engineer
- Database Administrator
- Junior Database Administrator
- Lead Artist
- Lead Animator
- Senior Environment Artist (Materials Specialist)
- Concept Artist
- Character Concept Artist
- 2D UI Artist
- Senior Designer
- Assistant Producer
- Community Officer
- Junior Test Engineer
- QA Tester
- Tools Tester

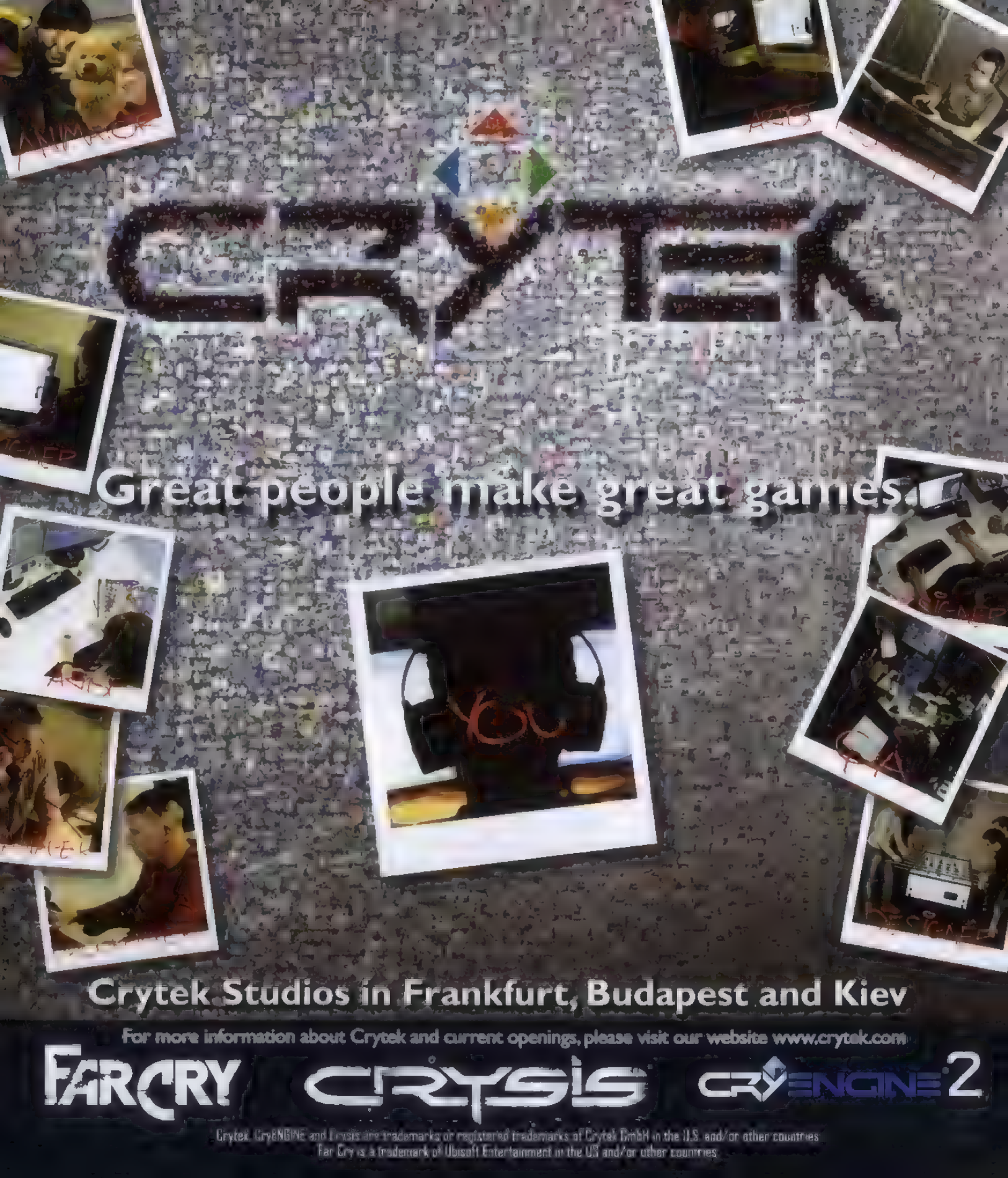


APB



www.realtimeworlds.com

© 2006-2008 Realtime Worlds, Inc.
APB and APB Online are trademarks of Realtime Worlds, Inc.
REALTIME WORLDS is a registered trademark of Realtime Worlds, Inc.
Unreal is a registered trademark of Epic Games Inc.



Great people make great games.

Crytek Studios in Frankfurt, Budapest and Kiev

For more information about Crytek and current openings, please visit our website www.crytek.com

FAR CRY

CRYSIS

CRYENGINE 2

Crytek, CRYENGINE and Crysis are trademarks or registered trademarks of Crytek GmbH in the U.S. and/or other countries.
Far Cry is a trademark of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries.

SHIFT▲UP

SHIFT PHYSICS ENGINE

Experience the most realistic driving physics ever. The game's physics engine is designed to provide a realistic and immersive driving experience.

PERFORMANCE ENGINE

The game's performance engine is designed to provide a realistic and immersive driving experience. It features a highly detailed and realistic driving experience.

DRIVING ENGINE

The game's driving engine is designed to provide a realistic and immersive driving experience. It features a highly detailed and realistic driving experience.



Ubisoft Reflections



REFLECTIONS



UBISOFT



Every one of the 170 individuals at Frontier shares your passion for games – it shines through our impressive track record. Our vision of videogames as the world's premier form of entertainment drives us to use our cutting-edge, in-house technology & tools to develop innovative, quality titles

Frontier has a great work environment, based on the Science Park in the vibrant city of Cambridge. We're big enough to produce a wide variety of content, and flexible enough for your ideas and enthusiasm to make a difference

Get in touch via www.frontier.co.uk – we're waiting to hear from you



All images © 2000 Frontier Developments Ltd. All rights reserved



Our Clients. Our Candidates. Our Network. Our Friends.

Hot Jobs

Director of Development	£HIGH	UK Studio
Senior Audio Programmer	£High ++	England - Midlands
Senior Graphics Programmer	£High	England - Midlands
Network Programmers +NEW+	£Comp ++	UK Wide
Lead Artist +FANTASTIC ROLE+	£Attractive	England - Midlands
Handheld Programmer	£HIGH	England - London
Senior Producers x3	£Competitive	UK Wide
Chief Level Designer	£HIGH++	England - Midlands
Senior Mobile Developer	£Competitive	England - South
Senior Tools Programmer	£Competitive	England - Midlands

Call +44 (0) 141 585 6491 or visit www.specialmove.com for more great jobs

The choice of the experienced games industry professional.



PLAYJAM IS THE WORLD'S
BEST ITV GAMES TO OVER
WORLDWIDE! BROADCASTING THE
HOMES

WE HAVE... FOR
TALENTED AND ENTHUSIASTIC CANDIDATES TO
JOIN OUR EXPERIENCED DEVELOPMENT TEAM
TO CREATE THE

GAME DESIGNER PRODUCTION ARTIST
GAMES DEVELOPER JUNIOR

IF YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE CASUAL GAMES
MARKET OR YOU WANT TO EXPAND AND
DIVERSIFY YOUR SKILL SET THEN GET IT TOUCH
WITH US NOW!



University profile

Like Top Trumps, but for universities

INSTITUTION NAME:

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: 1,400

CONTACT: digitalmedia@hud.ac.uk



KEY STAFF

KEY ALUMNI



Engineering
The expected resources for PC game development
but has also invested in Xbox 360 hardware

University of

HUDDERSFIELD



Huddersfield
West Yorkshire

COURSE INFORMATION

BA (Hons) Interactive
multimedia; BSc (Hons)
multimedia technology

INSIDE VIEW: BEN HINCHLIFFE COURSE BA (HONS) COMPUTER GAMES DESIGN

"I came to Huddersfield University straight after leaving sixth form. At the time Huddersfield was one of the only places to teach computer games design. Being a brand-new course at the time, I thought it would be fresh and very open. I found this to be very much the case."

"The course has taught me so much about games, 3D modeling, 2D art, animation, texturing and design work in general. What I love about the course is that it gives you the chance to experience a small part of everything and then you decide which path to follow."

"I chose to follow a producer/designer role. I'm currently working in the studio within the university making games for Xbox 360."

"At first I didn't know if I had made the right choice about coming to Huddersfield, however looking back on it now I think it's the best choice I have ever made. Being here has opened so many doors for me. I have made countless industry contacts including the likes of Rare, Team 17, Rockstar."

Having such contacts is priceless."



Get ahead of the game

MSc in Computer Games Technology

The MSc in Computer Games Technology is a one-year programme that provides a comprehensive understanding of the technical and creative aspects of game development.

The programme covers a wide range of topics, including game design, programming, and the business of games. It also includes a final year project where students can specialise in their chosen area of interest.

To find out more, visit www.soi.city.ac.uk/edge or call us on 020 7040 0248. Alternatively, email p.penqure@soi.city.ac.uk

www.soi.city.ac.uk/edge



STUDY AT QANTM. PART-TIME, FULL-TIME

DIPLOMA | DEGREE* | MASTERS*
*validated by Middlesex University

GAME DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

3D ANIMATION
GAME AUDIO PRODUCTION
GRAPHIC DESIGN
WEB DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

0845 017 1015
WWW.QANTM.COM

FREE EVENING WORKSHOPS AT OUR
LONDON CAMPUS

To register for these free taster workshops visit:
www.qantm.co.uk/workshops

NEXT OPEN DAY: 17TH AUGUST

Goldsmiths, University of London MSc Computer Games & Entertainment



www.gamesgoldsmiths.com

Location: Central London, 10 minutes from London Bridge
Director: William Latham



It's time to show off your gaming skills.

Amicus Talent Network

When it comes to finding the top **Studio Manager, Designer, Producer, Programmer and Art/Animation** roles for you - Amicus has the talent.

For the best roles, some of which you'll never see advertised, simply join the Amicus Talent Network and become part of the select group of people who get to hear about them first.

To take your career to the next level, simply register at:
amicus.talentnetwork.com



amicus 
GAMES

GET INTO GAMES

ADVICE ON A CAREER IN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT FROM THE INDUSTRY ITSELF

It would be the laziest of introductions were it not for one, absolutely true, there has never been a better time to get into games. Yes, the hours can still be long, yes, you could spend them making little more than a bump-mapped pair of cufflinks. And yes, there's still a chance that your slick, sassy girl n'ja game gets canned because the last slick, sassy girl n'ja game flopped. As the machinery of game production grows, the risks get bigger and the cogs become smaller—that's business.

But the avenues for entering what has become the biggest entertainment industry on Earth have since *Halo 2* crushed Hollywood's box office sales records are wider, more diverse and more accessible than ever. Gone are the days when amateur development meant wrestling with GJK Radiant or Sony's Net Yaroze, which at £400 still paled next to its in-house tools. If you're a PC gamer, chances are you already have a complete dev suite sitting on a dusty shelf or on your hard drive, bundled free with *Unreal Tournament* or *Crysis*. The latter, with its wonderfully intuitive level editor, came free as in the deno. And, as a growing number of those in the industry attest, the months you spend with a

mod team might be all you need to walk straight through a developer's front door. In the aftermath of EA Spouse, the chances are you'll enter a better-regulated, more sympathetic job if you do. Interminable crunch times and unpaid hours are no longer the industry's dirty little secret; the work-life balance now foremost on its agenda. Just ask an *Edge* writer whose visits are cut short when, in the late afternoon, an entire studio religiously clocks off and marches to the pub. The uptake of development models like Agile has largely dissolved the cubicles that once penned in programmers and left producers in the dark. So, even if you do end up making a thick, at least now you'll know where they're going.

In this 2008 edition of *Edge's Get Into Games*, some of the foremost talents in gaming share their experiences, expectations and opinions of an industry fast growing up. Among them, the writer of *Halo 3* has some good news for writers; the designer of *Crysis* shoots down some myths; the animator of *Heavenly Sword* shows you some moves; and Rare developers codify, for those on the road to university, we have people on hand to inform those on the next steps. Who knows? Maybe next year we'll be talking to you.

124	EXPERT OPINION: HIRE LEARNING
126	PROFILE: DESIGNER
127	PROFILE: WRITER
129	PROFILE: PROGRAMMER
131	PROFILE: TOOLS PROGRAMMER
132	PROFILE: TEXTURE ARTIST
133	PROFILE: AUDIO ENGINEER
135	PROFILE: ANIMATOR
137	FURTHER EDUCATION: INTRODUCTION
139	FURTHER EDUCATION: THE STUDENT VIEW
140	FURTHER EDUCATION: HUDDERSFIELD UNI
142	FURTHER EDUCATION: QANTM COLLEGE
144	FURTHER EDUCATION: CODE BASE
146	FURTHER EDUCATION: COURSE LISTINGS

EXPERT OPINION

HIRE LEARNING

How to get ahead in advertising... yourself



STIG STRAND
HEAD OF GAMES RECRUITMENT
AMICUS

While the opportunities within gaming increase with its size, its mobility means it'll always be a tricky place to land in. Ensuring that the ideal course in 2009 is as valid three or four years later is only part of the challenge, the expectations of a single discipline likely to evolve over time, requiring a different approach when drafting your application. Thankfully, the number of recruitment agencies offering advice is growing, too. **Stig Strand, Peter Leonard and Eamonn Mgherbi** of Amicus Recruitment having this to say

How healthy is the industry right now?

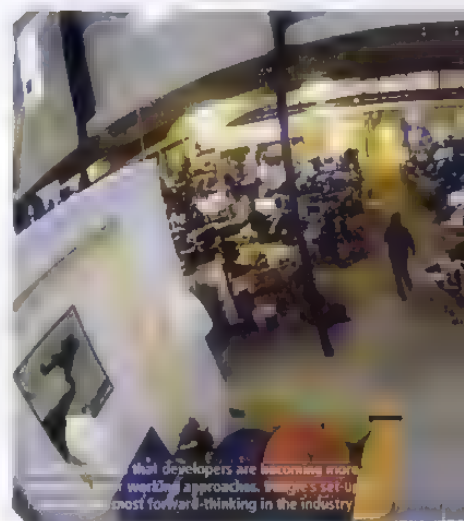
Stig Strand: The industry on the whole feels very healthy in terms of open requirements for programmers, designers, producers, artists and animators. Most development teams who have moved to next-generation platforms are still looking to expand teams

more important than ever for successful studio expansion plans in the future. As a result, this translates into more opportunities than ever for people looking to gain an entry-level position within the games industry, so graduates and candidates looking for a new direction into games should take full advantage of this

What roles are in demand right now?

SS: Graduate programmers are more in demand than ever, primarily for gameplay and tools roles for entry-level candidates, as these not only fill vital positions within a next-gen team but also provide a great start for graduates joining the industry. Computer Science courses are best equipped to prepare solid C++ fundamental skills which can be transferred into the games industry sector

Other priority roles for studios include those that are involved in the creation of



that developers are becoming more working approaches, Amicus's set-up most forward-thinking in the industry

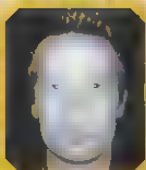
significantly over the next 12 months to accommodate the latest technology and graphical demands from consumers. But it has suffered from a lack of experienced applicants to fill these roles and this is why graduate recruitment will become

which dictates that developers produce larger and more detailed worlds, with more gameplay experiences and possibilities. Typically, the roles in demand to produce these assets are level designers, scripters and artists – particularly environment artists

A third consideration is that with every generation of hardware a series of new roles is introduced into the industry. Recent examples include systems designers, particularly important for MMOs and stat-heavy games, and technical art/animation positions for heavily character-driven titles

Amicus identifies the MMO genre (*Age of Conan*, below left) as an area in which the need for specialists is increasing. Meanwhile, titles such as *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* (below right) are helping to drive demand for environment artists





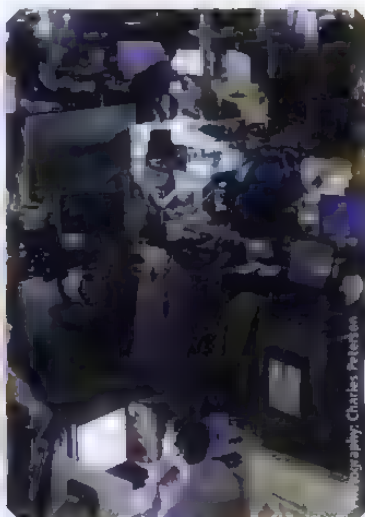
PETER LEONARD
LEAD CONSULTANT
AMIGUS



EAMONN MGHERBI
LEAD CONSULTANT
AMIGUS

in association with

qantm
amigus



Have you noticed an upswing in candidates applying abroad?

Eamonn Mgherbi: Yes, but only at an experienced level. The primary attracting factors are the life-changing locations that can be offered by particular territories with a developed games industry such as Canada and the number of equally compelling triple-A IPs being developed overseas. This is not the same for entry-level candidates, however, as the difficulty will always be in securing a visa or green card for positions abroad. Our advice is to investigate all of the openings within Europe as a starting point. The UK is a top-five global development community producing quality games to rival those from overseas, and it's an excellent place to develop a set of skills that could lead to a move overseas in the future.

Are universities better preparing their candidates for industry positions today?

Peter Leonard: It's true that many game-specific courses haven't always given graduates the best start, possibly due to course syllabuses that were either too generic in terms of game development training, or didn't provide enough focus on foundation knowledge and skills for the sector involved. The good news is that many universities are well aware of this and most are already changing structure to focus on specific areas

"THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE IS THINKING THAT YOUR DEGREE WILL GUARANTEE YOU A JOB IN GAMES. A DEGREE ON ITS OWN DOESN'T GUARANTEE SUCCESS"

of development, as well as improving the quality of the content. Some are also listening to studios and advising some graduates to concentrate on obtaining a respected traditional degree such as Computer Science, then build game-specific skillsets on top in the form of a masters qualification.

More universities have formed closer working relationships with local or national studios in the UK, which is a good way of ensuring that graduates have a chance to demonstrate their skills to key industry employers. Our advice would always be to register the CV and demo work from your course together with any hobbyist work, with a recruitment agency who can offer advice and structure your applications.

What's the most fatal assumption that candidates make?

PL: It's always that 'my degree will guarantee me a job in the games sector'. No matter how detailed the course content, a degree on its own does not guarantee success. A

studios that are graduate recruiters look for a demo of your work or a portfolio, whether it be a small C++ demo showing off your DirectX understanding as a programmer, or a selection of character models, concepted and finished in 3D Studio Max or Maya. They're even more important than your degree, so they need to be your best examples.

Demos and portfolios prove your ability to apply the knowledge you have learnt and meet the demands of a given vacancy. They're also a statement to a potential employer that you have the initiative to produce relevant, high-quality samples of work. This gives the impression of a particular attitude and work ethic they'll be attracted to.

Have hours and work conditions within the industry improved?

SS: They've generally improved, though

it's a long-term process and many studios are still trying to find the magic formula. Many larger and more global companies have the financial reserves and organisational infrastructure to incorporate policies such as holidays 'in lieu', flexitime, overtime payments and more to assist their teams and personnel.

That's more challenging for smaller studios, but they're equally scaling back their projects to suit the teams they have in place. Studios large and small are choosing alternative methods by which to manage their projects, which they feel allow for more flexibility and provide a much better marriage of creative goal achievement and managing milestones, which in turn directly affects the amount of hours worked.

It's a highly demanding and creative industry, however, and a certain element of crunch should always be expected. How a studio limits the gravity of such periods and what's offered in return is what candidates should always consider when choosing their next employer.

STARTING SALARIES

Below is a range of starting salaries based on locations in London and south east UK. A usual London weighting applies, so expect ten per cent less for, say, the Midlands and north west.

Entry-level programmer:
£18K-£25K
Entry-level artist:
£18K-£21K
Entry-level designer:
£17K-£21K
Entry-level animator:
£18K-£21K
Entry-level producer/project manager:
£18K-£22K
Entry-level tester:
£12K-£15K

PROFILE

DESIGNER

Having vision is one thing, but can you see the bigger picture?



TONY DAVIS
LEAD DESIGNER
CRYTEK



The design challenge of a game like *Crysis*, with multi- and singleplayer modes built upon different rules, the same weapons and bleeding-edge technology, could easily overwhelm

often likened to movie directing and doubly misunderstood, the job of designing games involves more than just emerging from your office to cast lightning bolts of inspiration across the studio. Nothing annoys artists and engineers more than someone who knows their games but refuses to get their hands dirty. And while larger team sizes and intuitive tools have all but removed the need for designers

to know their code, there's a tenet of the job that's now more important than ever: always be learning, because you can never know enough. **Tony Davis**, lead designer at Crytek, shows us the ropes.

How did you find your way into design?

'I wanted to be a 3D artist, so I had my Amiga and was making demo floppy disks in the early '90s. Eventually, I built a website, and it was a remake of a game from the '80s called *Comer Command*. I mocked up the graphics in 3D Studio Max. I got some interest, was interviewed by PC Zone in the UK, and that website alone got me talking to a guy who was talking to Crytek. He was actually remaking *Elite*. This was before Crytek had an office – it was just a few guys and some mailing lists. And I thought: If this guy can get a job, maybe I can too.

So one cheeky Sunday afternoon, I sent an email to this bloke Cevat [Yerli, Crytek cofounder], and said: 'If you're looking for a 3D artist, I'm your man.' And he emailed me back the same day and said: 'Well, we don't have any positions for 3D artists right now,

continue what they were doing before which is basically firing up our editor, positioning trees, positioning enemies and playtesting. We have a stand-up every day, so each group of seven or eight people will get together for 15 minutes at around 11am, and we talk about what we did yesterday and what we'll do today. That way, everyone gets an idea of what everyone else is working on, no one disappears off for three weeks and then pops up and surprises everyone.

Later, we'll get together in a conference room for an hour and get people from the rest of the company – R&D programmers, say, who don't really have an idea of what the game's about – and write down what they're feeling as they play. Then the level designers will get together as a group and talk about that experience. What we end up with is a situation where the game talks to us through these people and tells us what it wants to be.

What are the basic misconceptions about the designer's role?

We've had candidates come to Crytek who've billed themselves as game designers, and their tool of choice is Microsoft Word. They think that they can write documents and that the rest of us poor schmucks will execute their vision. The role of game designer doesn't really exist at Crytek, we have a lead designer, of course, and writing Word documents is his job. But the thing is that we have our own tools, and we even shipped those with the *Crysis* demo. So when people come to me and I say, "Well, what do you think of the Crytek editor?", if they have a blank look on their face then I start to think they should've done their homework.

What's the ideal portfolio for an aspiring videogame designer?

Get involved in a mod – for any engine. If you can demonstrate that you can make something in Valve's Hammer editor, you can transfer those skills across to the CryEngine. We have the CryMod.com community, so get involved in that. Make a webpage, get screenshots up, make a couple of levels and play around with it. Make it so that, if we interview you, you can talk about the work

"WE HAVE A STAND-UP EVERY DAY, SO TALK ABOUT WHAT WE DID YESTERDAY AND WHAT WE'LL DO TODAY"

but we do need a game designer'. I didn't know anything about game design, but I was told that was fine. I could pick it up as I went along. What I didn't realise was that there were no 3D artists and there were no programmers. But that website showed I could think along those lines and it got me in. So when I went out to Germany in November 2000, I was employee number two. Employee number one beat me by a couple of days, so I'm a bit annoyed about that.

What's in a day's work for a designer?

We do the Agile development system here so we have a scrum on a month-by-month basis. At the beginning of the month everyone agrees on what they're going to work on and they get a list of items from the producer. So people will come in and

An embarrassment of teapots: Crytek's 'Streets Of San Francisco' demo at GDC 2008 was an entirely playable level built, like *Crysis*, using its publicly available toolset

PROFILE



MARC LAIDLAW
WRITER
VALVE SOFTWARE

WRITER

As the plots thicken, the prospects for their authors widen

We've all heard the one about the 16bit developer penning a classic game premise on the back of a cigarette packet, but writing for today's games is a different story. Though it struggles to earn the respect of literary scholars or the unionised Hollywood machine, storytelling in games is at least breaking free of its old prison: the non-interactive cutscene. As *Half-Life 2* writer **Marc Laidlaw** keenly reminds us, the presence of an in-house writer can dramatically enhance a game's originality and verve. And, after the rampant success of *Portal*, the industry agrees.

How did you get started as a writer?

I always wanted to be a writer. Ever since I was young, that was what I did and worked on, and I found myself becoming a full-time writer of fiction and short stories. I was interested in writing movies, but it didn't seem like a very good fit. From what I knew about being a director, organising that many people to get your vision across was very intimidating. As I became more aware of games, around the time of *Quake*, I just felt that was the thing I'd been unknowingly preparing myself for all along.

Is it a day-to-day job like coding or art?

I work alongside the whole team through the whole game – it's pretty much always been that way with *Half-Life*. We've tried it different ways, like having me in the room with the guys building the levels and doing the code, but as the team's got bigger it's become harder being with all of the people all of the time. So we've splintered off, and people will now come to me with problems.

There's always a fine balance between dramatic elements and gameplay, wanting those dramatic elements to emerge through gameplay rather than cutscenes is a big thing here. I know that's not the case with every company, but we try to keep fully integrated. *Portal*, for instance, is something where they'd worked on the game mechanic for a long time, Erik Wolpaw stepping in while things were still in flux to enhance the experience through the writing.

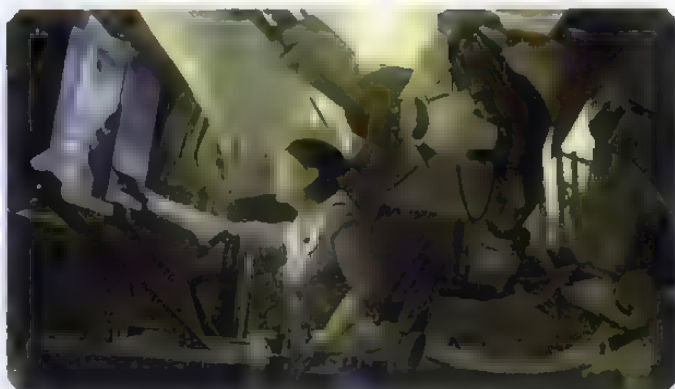
The avenues into writing don't seem the same as for the rest of gaming.

I do tell writers to try and get involved with



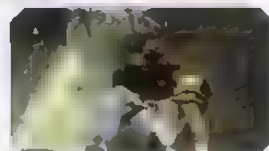
Until gaming adopts a universal appreciation of writing's power, not just as filler, writers will have to endure plenty of compromise and, as they say, kill plenty of babies. Few studios offer the same opportunities as a Valve (creator of *Left 4 Dead*, above, and the *Half-Life* series, right) or Ubisoft.

mods. The stories for those always seem to predate any feeling for gameplay, so they'd benefit, just as any studio would, from early involvement with someone passionate about storytelling. It's a good way for the writer to start learning about the other disciplines involved in game creation, it certainly was an education for me. If you want to have a deep effect on the game you're working on, the



How about comic book writing?

A lot of people are going back and forth between games and comic books. There's a component of narrative structuring you're doing there that's purely visual, that's really important in games. So Joshua Ortega has gone from doing comic adaptations for *Gears Of War* to writing *Gears Of War 2*. And game reviews: Chet [Faliszek] and Erik



more you can understand the tools, the more you can get your vision across. A lot of what goes on around video is extremely technical and not at all related to how dramatic the scene is going to be.

What's the ideal portfolio?

There's still nothing better than professional publication in respected markets for fiction. In the UK you've got Interzone, for example. At least then you've got a standard, you can say "Look, I've done work that other people considered was worth paying money for. I saw this thing through and I've got this body of work to show for it." That's still the thing I'd hate to say it was the only way that is hard right now because there's no way to get feedback from people who are doing the same thing. There aren't that many giants to compare yourself to.

did their site [Old Man Murray] for a long time, developed their own style and voice and then Erik ended up writing *Psychonauts* and *Portal*.

What kind of job security is there in this particular line of work?

That might be one reason why a lot of writers contract on games at this point, and it may be the most useful model for companies for a long time. As an employee, the attraction is being able to go from project to project, one world to another. When I started working in the industry there was a lot of curiosity. Now, you hear a lot of producers voicing their commitment to story. Whole studios like Ubisoft clearly say in their press releases how story is this unifying force in everything they do. Things are certainly stabilising.



Welcome to your new place of work



Introducing graduate careers at SN Systems - world leaders in software and support to the gaming industry. As a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc (SCEI), we set the standard for development tools within the worldwide games industry.

We can offer you the opportunity to build a great career in a fast-moving, challenging environment, where you'll be given the time and guidance to develop your talent to its full potential.

For more information please visit www.sn-systems.com/careers.



PROFILE

PROGRAMMER

And you thought the puzzles in Portal were hard

If you think object orientation means putting three bejewelled statues on the correct plinths to open Ramon Salazar's private bathroom, you might want to skip this page. Conversely, if you think the job of a programmer is to go trailblazing while the lesser mortals catch you up, you should probably reboot your ego. Programming naturally favours those predisposed to bravura problem-solving feats, but its need for communication and coordination is as great now as with any modern discipline. And, as **Kieran Connell**, head of software at Rare, explains, calling yourself a specialist isn't always advantageous.

What makes up a day's work for a game programmer?

That depends very much on what part of the lifecycle you're in. At the very beginning you can start with concepts and prototyping, with a very small team and a creative environment where you might be working one-on-one with the designer. You'd be working on new ideas and different systems on a day-to-day basis, normally reusing the existing game engine, putting pieces together in different combinations.

Then you move forward to a preproduction stage which is more about technology, figuring out what and how much technology's going to be required. That's when the really technical guys get involved, thinking about how they'll get the art guys' stuff into the game. Then there's the final process which is obviously production, which is about getting content in, testing and debugging. Day to day, it could vary from talking to designers to working out bug lists and working out what's needed to get the game shipped.

How has the job evolved?

Even with Rare, games are so big and complex that one individual team can't do everything themselves. So we either use middleware – we use Havok for a lot of our games – or we have an internal shared technology group. With the sheer number of content creators required, the tools have to be much more robust and scalable, even compared to Xbox days. It's an order of magnitude greater

Do you need to have a wider overview nowadays?

I wouldn't say that's necessarily true. Some people have actually become more specialised because certain areas have become much more complicated. So you'll find people specialising in, say, networking, due to the explosion of online. The problems can be very difficult and so people need to concentrate. At the higher level, I suppose, they need to have a broad knowledge of what's going on – but even they might not be able to dive deep into something like the graphics engine any more; they might need to defer the nitty-gritty to greater minds, so to speak.

KIERAN CONNELL
HEAD OF SOFTWARE
RARE

need to be solved and tackled from a software point of view, so if anyone can have a non-trivial demo of that capability, be that from the world of computer science, database or compiler technology, or some sort of algorithm, that's equally valuable to us as someone who's created an entire game on their own.

How much of the job can be prepared for in advance?

You need to learn the basic skills of the trade, and that's far more about fundamental things that are transferable: maths skills or algorithm skills, good low-level programming skills, and an understanding of how a



Can learning UnrealEd really, as Epic suggests, guarantee you a job?

Just sitting down with Unreal Editor probably won't. It's good for Epic that Unreal is probably the closest we have to a standard editor environment, and it is something to put on your CV if you know your tools. But there's a lot more that people need to know especially from a software point of view.

What's the ideal portfolio?

For software, it doesn't necessarily have to be game-related. That always helps, obviously, because we make games for a living. But there are some very difficult problems that

computer works, the GPU and CPU. Other things are more ephemeral. A lot of people will put that they know DirectX, for instance; that's great for us because we make games for the Xbox, but it's irrelevant for PS3 developers. It's the same with specific languages – so long as you know how to understand the concept of computer languages and how to program, it doesn't really matter what language we use in the future. So there's a lot you can learn at university, but you have to make sure it's the fundamentals; showing that you're up to date and relevant is just the icing on the cake.

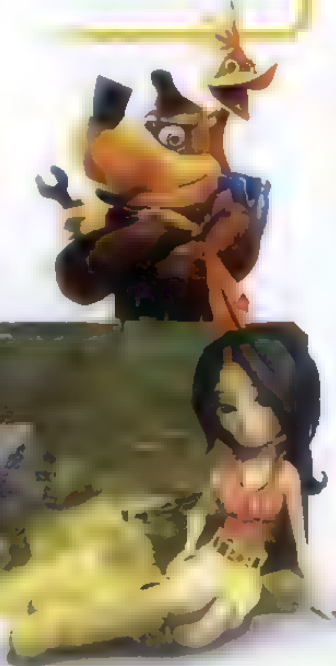


Rare's software team runs a continuous graduate recruitment programme, inductees given a three-month assessment period within either its shared technology group or game teams. Applicants should contact gradrecruitment@rare.co.uk

In association with
qantm
amikus



Working primarily with DirectX-based Microsoft platforms (though Viva Pinata's PC port is by Climax) means an easier job for engineers at Rare, from tools support to software R&D.



**How would you like to work for one of the
worlds leading game studios?**

CRYTEK

**Just graduated?
Love games?
Eager to learn?**

Ask about our Intern programs today!

We Have Studios in

- . Frankfurt
- . Budapest
- . Kiev
- . Sofia

We Offer

- . Relocation Support
- . Free Accommodation
- . Free Public Transport
- . Free Lunch Package
- . Monthly Salary
- . Diverse International Team
- . The Experience of a Lifetime!

**Apply Today at www.Crytek.com
Or Via email to Internship@crytek.com**

FAR CRY

CRYSIS

CRYENGINE 2

Crytek, CryENGINE and Crysis are trademarks or registered trademarks of Crytek GmbH in the U.S. and/or other countries.
Far Cry is a trademark of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries.

PROFILE

TOOLS PROGRAMMER

There's a reason it's referred to as the backbone of the industry

Sony may have stumbled with its development tools in the earliest days of PlayStation, but the risk attached to modern triple-A games leaves little margin for error. The job of tools programming has evolved in tandem with the ambitions of Sony and Microsoft, not just in terms of complexity but also magnitude and responsibility. As a wholly owned subsidiary of SCE, Bristol's SN Systems has arguably the toughest job keeping pace. For those undaunted by the challenge however, **Greg Bedwell** offers his support

How did you get started in games?

As a young child I used to write simple games in BASIC using letters of the alphabet as graphics on my VIC-20, and later on my Amstrad CPC. Once I finished school I went on to study for a Master of Engineering in Computer Science at the University of Bristol, becoming interested in compilers and computer languages. For my big final-year project I developed some compiler testing software for a local non-games-related semiconductor company. I ended up working with them as a contractor for a year after graduating.

I wasn't specifically looking for something to do with game development, but then heard about a role within SN Systems working on a C++ toolchain for the PS3.

To what extent can you train for the job?

Tools programming covers a broad range of different areas. I'm primarily focused on the programming aspect and trying to help game developers work as efficiently as possible and create the best code they can. To that end, it's important that I understand their workflow which often may involve aspects other than programming. There's not really any way to train for that other than just visiting and talking to developers and seeing how they work.

How has the job evolved?

In a way it's hard for me to answer that as I've really only been involved myself for a couple of years, however, even over that time I've seen changes. Developing games has become more and more complex, and so have the tools that accompany them. As a result, the size of the team has grown

considerably since I joined and is still expanding. We need more developers to test as well as create tools than ever before.

As well as our main office in Bristol we've recently opened a new office in San Jose, California where I spent just over a month this year working with our compiler engineers. Having engineers working in multiple time zones means that development and user support can continue pretty much around the clock, but it does present whole new problems with how to effectively communicate with each other.

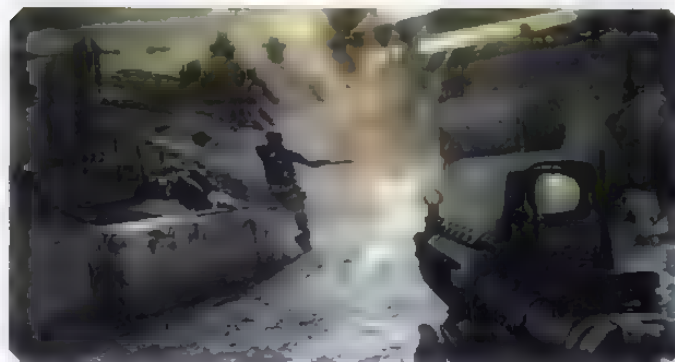
What would be an ideal portfolio?

There are so many different routes into tools programming that it's impossible to say. We have many people working at SN Systems that have come straight from the game industry with plenty of published game titles under their belts, and others that probably never even picked up a game pad before they came here. The thing that we all have in common is a talent for problem solving. If someone can demonstrate that then they are already halfway there.

Not everyone here is a C++ guru or knows the ins and outs of the entire instruction set on the processor, but certainly a demonstrable understanding of writing good, solid, efficient code is a requirement. Good communication skills are essential both inside the team and when dealing with users. You can be the best coder in the world but you also need to be able to function as part of a much larger team and be able to provide support. It doesn't hurt to have decent *Pro Evo* skills either. Our daily lunchtime sessions are a matter of honour and pride. Losing isn't an option.

Can tools programming lead to a career elsewhere in development?

I certainly don't see why not. It's extremely good for making contacts at different studios and getting hands-on experience with the



way games are made. But I definitely don't see it as just a stepping stone myself. Never say never, but right now I feel like I'm in one of the most interesting and privileged places to be in the industry. You don't get your name in the game credits but the sense of satisfaction of being pivotal to the creation of triple-A titles is amazing.

A question you haven't asked is whether game development can lead to careers in



Ask any developer, be they in-house or external, and they'll tell you that PS3 is, much like its predecessor, a different beast to any other platform. SN's role, then, is vitally important.

tools programming, and the answer is most definitely yes. There are a number of people that I can think of from a game development background working in tools programming at the moment. They have a good understanding of what game developers want, having been there themselves, which is always useful.



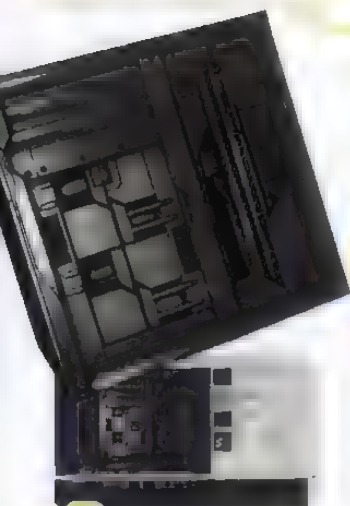
When games like *Little Big Planet* (above) and *Killzone 2* (top) creep into extended development, supporting the dev teams can be just as stressful as working for them.



OPTIMIZER TEAM LEADER
SN SYSTEMS

In association with

qantm
amiquis



Drawing textures versatile enough to withstand any and all light conditions and surroundings is hard enough even before the economies of resolution and throughput are added to the equation. Algorithms like parallax mapping help keep the balance

PROFILE

TEXTURE ARTIST

Putting the 'real' in realtime while fleshing out every gory detail

The job of a texture artist has hardly become easier since the advent of HD. Modern television panels and monitors have little sympathy for the craggy bump-maps and flickering seams that, just a few years ago, might have disappeared behind 60Hz scanlines. Modern engines have made print-standard, WYSIWYG screenshots the norm, gamers expecting perfect, porous detail at ever-earlier stages of development. From *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay* to *The Darkness*, Starbreeze has kept its clanty under such conditions, earning a reputation for cinematic visuals that hanker for a close-up. Texture artist **Carolina Dahlberg** describes the challenge

How did you get started in games?

I've always liked games, ever since I was a child and we got a C64 in our home. But I wouldn't say that I ever became a real gamer. It was just one of many interests I had and still is. What really made the difference was that I loved to write stories and create worlds. Everything from grand concepts with epic stories, to details like characters and props. I drew maps, made character portraits and designed their attire, home, background

and the world they lived in. My original goal was actually to become a film director.

A couple of years ago I realised the potential of games in telling the same stories and creating worlds – but in a playful and immersive way that made it even more compelling. After three years at Uleå University of Technology, on the Computer Graphics programme, I got in contact with Starbreeze and did my thesis work here.

Why focus on texture work?

I've been drawing and painting since I was old enough to hold a pen. I am still aiming to work with concept art, but the needs in this area are often very specific, and the requirements are high. Working with textures is also very artistically challenging, but in a different way. It forces you to focus on details and materials, something that's often missed out when you 'just paint'.

How much does your artistic vision have to work around the limits of the Starbreeze engine?

This is very much a question of experience. When I started working at Starbreeze, I felt extremely limited. It seemed like whatever I



CAROLINA DAHLBERG
TEXTURE ARTIST
STARBREEZE STUDIOS



Starbreeze has been using various iterations of its engine and accompanying Ogier toolset for years, its subsequent mastery evident in *The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, which still looks stellar on a good PC.

task before we start working on anything.

What would you consider the ideal portfolio for a budding texture artist?

Show that you are a skilled artist. Provide concrete samples of work – not just screenshots of game levels but also hi-res texture maps. But less is more. Show only samples that you are truly proud of.

How much of your skill was acquired prior to working at Starbreeze?

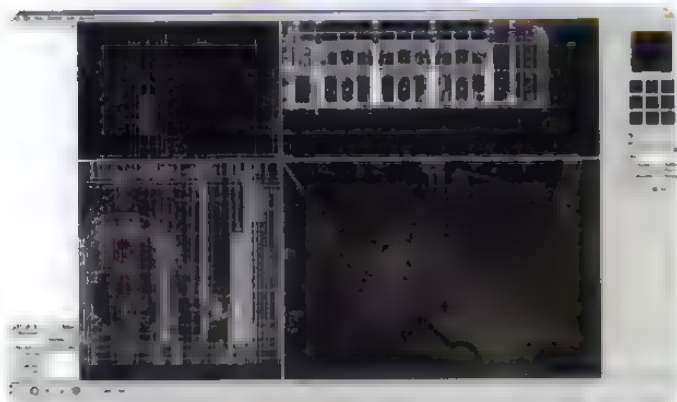
The really strange thing is, I'd done no level texturing whatsoever when I came to Starbreeze. My original plan had been to get into concept art. With level texturing especially the type of highly detailed textures that Starbreeze use – I was a complete noob! But I was already used to working with the programs required, and I proved my ability to quickly learn new skills and software.

What software, specifically?

As a texture artist, I work mainly with Maya and Photoshop. I then import the raw textures into the Starbreeze Engine tool Ogier, and start working with the surface set-up. There are a million settings to try out here, and the challenge is to make it optimal for every material. Something a texture artist can't live without is a good photo stock to get raw material to work with. Starbreeze has a huge texture library for this purpose.

A tricky thing is to know what you are allowed to imitate. There's a paradox: our work is to create realistic materials and environments, but if we use the wrong reference for a texture there's a risk of copyright infringement. It is sad to see this development in the industry, but it's something we must pay attention to.

– NOT JUST SCREENSHOTS BUT ALSO HI-RES TEXTURE MAPS. BUT SHOW ONLY SAMPLES YOU ARE TRULY PROUD OF



Things have come far since the days of *Quake III*, when time would be spent fastidiously 'caulking' under textures to save rendering time. Though still an important factor, the process is largely automated now.

PROFILE

AUDIO ENGINEER

How to land in gaming with a bang, thump, clatter and clang



PETER HAJBA
AUDIO ENGINEER
REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT

The complexities of modern audio may be lost on the majority of gamers, a 7.1 audio setup costing more than a console and requiring marital diplomacy on a supernatural level. But the needs of the enthusiast, together with the industry's zealous desire to wrap you ever more in its games, makes those challenges seem lightweight.

Amid the gravel trays and circus props of a Foley room or the diads and keyboards of a studio, a job in audio belongs to just a select few, and can involve a lot more besides simply making noise. Just ask **Peter Hajba**, the man behind the sound, particle effects and textures of Remedy's cacophonous *Max Payne*, currently at work on the forthcoming *Alan Wake*.

How does a working day pan out for an audio engineer at Remedy?

I may be asked to create a set of randomly varied one-shot collisions on sounds for a physical object like a crate, a certain game event, or to create voice sync and Foley work for a cutscene. We have a curve-based 'modulated sound' editor built into our world editor tool, which allows me to create more complex and parametric sound behaviours for car engines, weather and other sounds. These take a good deal of tweaking. Every now and then I need to spend a day or two to go through all the sounds in the game and make sure they work together and don't conflict with each other.

A lot of audio engineers record their own sound material, but I only do it in special

FRIENDS' HOBBY GAME. ANIMATION TALENTS AND FOCUS ON THEM"

Have you always aspired to work with audio in games?

I've wanted to work on games for as long as I can remember, but audio came at a later point when I started getting into computer music with *Scream Tracker 2*, the first Amiga tracker-style program for the PC. I joined the PC demoscene and became primarily known as a musician. Audio design for games came as a natural next step, though I have also worked on character animation, texture art and particle effects.

What opportunities were available for an aspiring audio engineer back then, and how did you find your way into the industry?

My opportunities in audio were purely hobby-based. I built a reputation in the hobbyist circles and later some of my scene friends founded Remedy. They knew me and what I could do, and asked me to join. At that moment, I was studying animation in Dublin and had to decide whether to continue my studies or abandon them and join the company. Had I not been offered the opportunity back then, I would have finished my animation studies.

cases and mostly rely on stock footage – properly mixed and matched, of course. Recording and editing sound effects can involve an enormous amount of work if it's to be done properly. Luckily, our publisher has very good audio production facilities at our disposal for more special recording needs, such as car engine sound loops.

How much did you learn before you embarked on your career?

It's hard to say how much I've learned at any particular time. During the hobby phase and in the beginning of my career I learned many basic things, then later on whatever I learned got refined. But there's still tons of new things to learn – for anyone.

Audio is a select aspect of most studios. Is it quite hard to break into it?

Somewhat, yes. This is mainly because, while programmers and artists usually work in large groups, there's usually only one or two audio designers in a game company. There may not even be enough audio work for a single designer during the whole span of a game project. Due to this, many game audio designers and musicians work as freelancers.



What would you consider the ideal portfolio for a candidate looking to get started today?

It depends a lot on the company. Some companies expect the audio engineer to also program the audio engine. Others expect music composition skills in addition to sound design. Some companies only hire freelancers.

You learn best by doing. Join your friends' hobby game, animation or video projects. Find your best talents and focus on them, but keep at least a thin coverage of all the basics. And build a portfolio. Keep in mind that game audio, especially for mobile devices, can get pretty technical due to hardware limitations. Just having a good musical and aural sense may not be enough – the audio also needs to conform to the technical limits.

Audio design for games is also very different in nature from film audio. Instead of creating a linear soundtrack, you need to create a large set of individual sounds which must work well together. This scatters your work into small and tricky-to-manage bits that require a good ability to see – and hear – the whole picture.

In association with

qantm
amikus



Soon to be unveiled in dramatically different shape to that of 2006, when it already looked stunning, *Alan Wake* promises a technological tsunami to rival, maybe even surpass, *Crysis*. That hasn't come easily, though, or quickly.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Games Education with a Reputation

Real Education in Games,

Computer Science and Software Development

BSc, MEng, MSc and PhD

Your first step to a career as a games programmer



Image courtesy of a student. All rights reserved

Quotes from employers

"We've been tremendously impressed with the quality of the students graduating from the Hull games courses and are always keen to see them with a view to hiring. Having employed and worked with Hull graduates for a number of years, I'd highly recommend the course to aspiring game developers."

Meryl Brown, Technical Director - Team 1 Software Ltd.

"Hull University offers a course that provides its students with highly relevant industry skills and pushes them to excel in an energetic environment. It's great to see students that not only meet the expectations of a highly competitive job market, but raise that bar still further."

Tom Williams, Technical Director - Climax Racing

"Hull really excels at putting cutting-edge technology into the hands of its students, and encouraging their students to develop enquiring minds. When coupled with the broad practical knowledge taught at the University, we see real industry-ready students who constantly delight their employers."

Andy Sithers, Academic Lead - Microsoft UK

HOW TO APPLY

For an application form, further information or enquiries please contact:

Admissions Secretary
Department of Computer Science
The University of Hull
HULL HU6 7RX, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)1482 465951

Fax +44 (0)1482 466666

email: admissions@dcshull.ac.uk

For quotes from students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit: www.dcs.hull.ac.uk. For information on our open days please email: admissions@dcshull.ac.uk

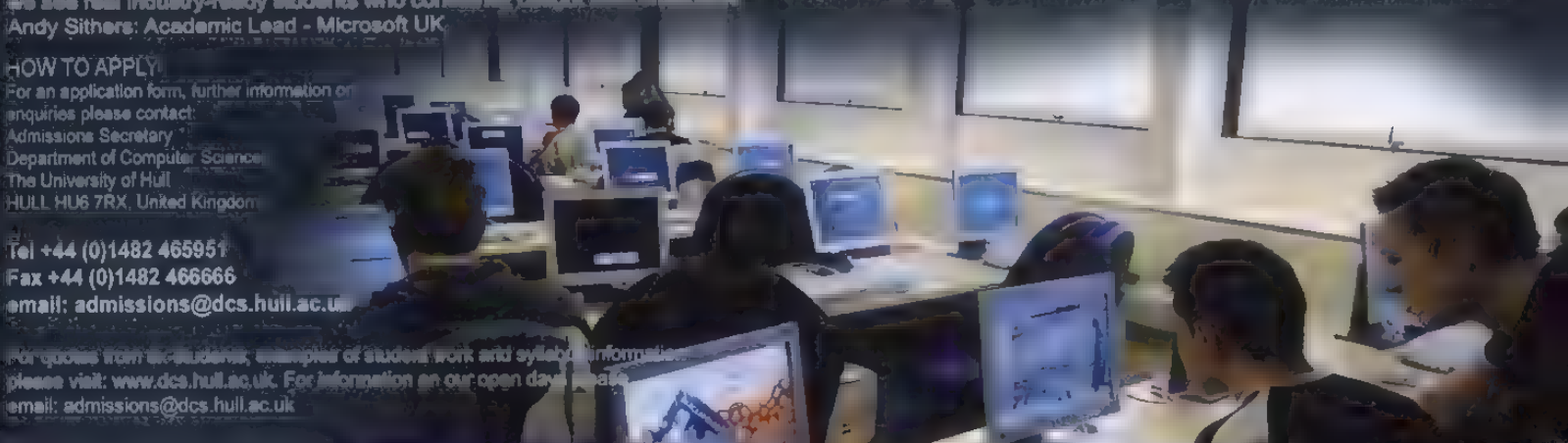
The Computer Science department at the University of Hull has been offering computer games related education since 1996. Its graduates are now working at some of the world's most prestigious game development companies.

Undergraduate Games at Hull

The BSc and MEng in Computer Science with Games Development provides a solid education in Computer Science combined with specialist studies in games programming. The skills gained on the course are directly relevant to the computer games industry as well as being applicable to a wide range of computing careers. The Department has been recently assessed by the government's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and was awarded the highest level of quality judgement attainable. First year students were among the first in the world to develop games for the Xbox 360 using XNA integrated into their studies. Current third year students are developing games for the PC, Game Cube, PSP and Smartphone. The department works closely with Microsoft and Sony to ensure that the teaching equipment is relevant to the current generations of games hardware.

Postgraduate Games at Hull

The Games Programming MSc at Hull University is an advanced MSc. You will need a good science degree (2.2 or higher) with some programming experience to gain a place on the course. The course is one year full time. In the first eight months you will complete the formal taught parts of the syllabus including: C++ programming, design, multi-core programming, advanced graphics, physics and AI for games. Combined with a large group game development and advanced shader GPU programming you will leave with an excellent portfolio of programming demos. On successful completion of all the formal assessments you will complete a four-month full time project. Graduates from the MSc are in high demand from the games industry and are usually offered jobs before completing their studies.



THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

www.dcs.hull.ac.uk

PROFILE

ANIMATOR

Where making the right move just keeps getting trickier

How apt that animation, of all the professions within the modern studio, has proved the most animated. It isn't just motion capture that's become instrumental in games like *Assassin's Creed* and *Killzone 2* – it's a complex blend of this, traditional keyframe and dynamic procedural animation, each of which has its share of fierce loyalists. We ask **Guy Midgley**, lead animator at Ninja Theory, to help us keep track.

How did you get started in games?

I came in straight out of university – a BA in Computer Animation at Bournemouth University. Simple as that. Although there wasn't the wealth of animation courses there are today, when I went to university there were only a couple of places in the UK that did something applicable. So it was either follow my Ro-f's Cartoon Club dream or become an engineer. I chose Ro-faroo.

I was lucky enough that the guys from Just Add Monsters liked what they saw and got me in. Back then I wasn't just an animator, I was involved in all parts of the character pipeline: modelling, texturing and rigging. That's partly to do with how the industry worked back then and also the fact we were a small company.

How does your working day pan out?

Enter office, animate, exit office is the basic gist of it. Yeah, there's obviously more to it than that but if you're an animator here you've been hired because you're a good animator, not because you can complete *Ninja Gaiden*.

Most of the time it's creating the various in-game animation assets, whether it's walk/run cycles, attacks, action set-pieces or cutscene work. But then there's also the technical side, talking with design and code [teams], making sure what you've made fits with what they need or want. The iterative side is very important to us.

How have you evolved as an animator?

University gave me a good grounding; before then I'd never really touched a PC in anger. I came out of it with a far more technical knowledge than I'd expected – though that isn't the case with many other courses. The industry has changed, however, especially on

larger titles. The pipeline is much more like film and TV production, with roles becoming more specialised – animators really do only animate and don't have to worry much about modelling or texturing.

One thing everyone will find is just how quickly and how much you improve when you're actually working in the industry. Part of it's because you're spending all day every day doing it, and part of it is because you're surrounded by experienced people who can show what you're doing wrong and what you're doing right.

What difficulties exist between animators and coders?

The first is language. We're pretty good for it here but at the extreme you can have a very tech-heavy programmer used to gabbing on about Lua scripting, parameters, conditions and switch case loops, trying to have a conversation with an artistically minded animator. The second would be

"IT'S APPRECIATING THE VIEWER THAT COUNTS. ARE YOU MAKING SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF OR SOMETHING TO SHOW"

priorities. Programmers want the animations to be responsive and not break their lovingly defined rules. Whereas animators just want the thing to look hot – who cares if an animation takes longer than it should? Sometimes one is more important than the other and that's a judgement call, in other cases it's compromise.

What would you consider the ideal portfolio for an aspiring animator?

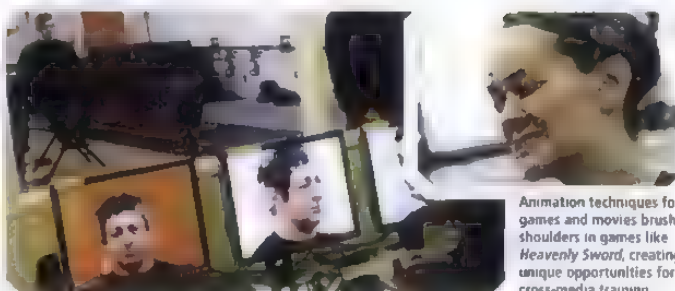
The main rule should be: only include your best work. There's often a tendency for people, especially those just starting out, to include practically everything they've ever done on an application or website. A portfolio consists of two things: individual pieces you can flick through, and the showreel. To be honest, your application lives and dies by the showreel. A character's walk cycle from a game isn't going to interest me if the reel's not up to snuff.

Also, know the role you want to do

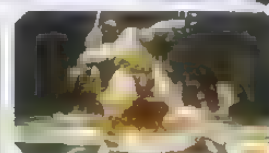
GUY MIDGLEY
LEAD ANIMATOR
NINJA THEORY

In association with

qantm
amikus



If you want to work on the cinematic acting side, make sure you include lip-sync and acting pieces. Lots of people include pieces they've done for online competitions like 11 Second Club (www.11secondclub.com). If you're interested in action and gameplay animation, put in some recoils, attacks and big action pieces. If you know you're going to be working with mocap, demonstrate a bit of that.



Few studios share Ninja Theory's influence on the film industry, veterans of which fill many of its key roles



Canalside Studios

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN...

ARE YOU WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR?

We are seeking talented and enthusiastic
A level & BTEC students to join Canalside
Studios at the University of Huddersfield,
who are looking for a career in:

- 3D Art
- Production
- Design
- 2D Art
- Programming
- Animation

Courses include:

Computer Games Design [G4W6 BA/CGD]

Computer Games Programming [G602 BSc/CGP]

**We don't just teach games we make games.
Join the studio experience today!**



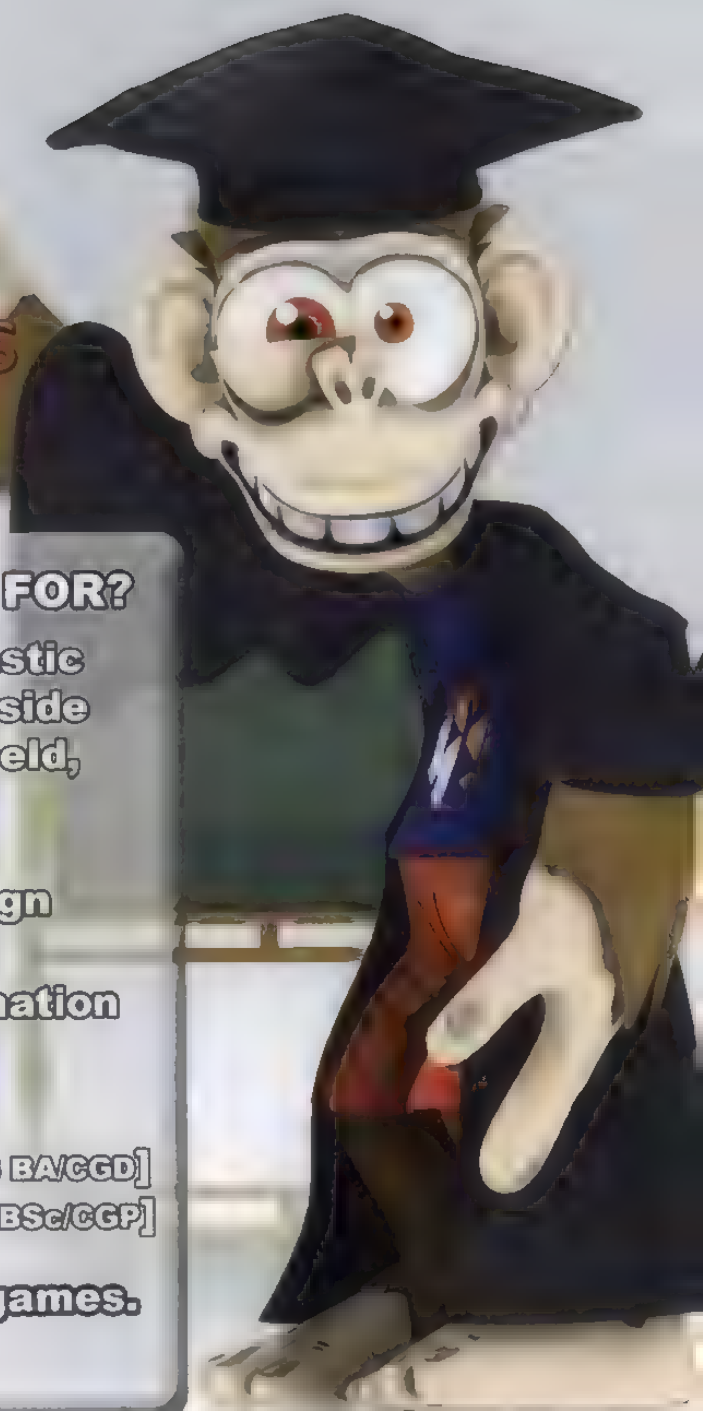
University of
HUDDERSFIELD

<http://digitalmedia.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate>



Canalside Studios

www.canalsidestudios.co.uk



GET INTO GAMES

FURTHER EDUCATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE GAME MAKER'S APPRENTICESHIP

As students of computing courses during the '90s may have realised, education and industry don't always see eye to eye. If the boom in higher education has turned students into consumers, the creation of courses to 'sell' to them has often conflicted with knowledge of what should be taught, or indeed what should happen after they graduate. For every degree that leads seamlessly into a dream job, a dozen might catapult you into an abyss with the old excuse: "Well, no one said it was easy." However, though, there really is no excuse. Such are the opportunities within gaming that no motivated student with the right credentials should find themselves left out. The vicious circle of needing experience to get experience still exists, but crucially it's experience found increasingly in lecture halls, labs and even modestly equipped bedrooms. With many designers and engineers

becoming lecturers, the industry's tools and talent are at your disposal. Whatever the benefits of self-education, joining a mod team and learning to promote yourself – it's certainly cheaper, for one – full-time education is far from obsolete. On the contrary, not only can university debunk the myths that might otherwise trip you up, but it can also recreate the studio ecosystem, provide the tools you still can't download for free, and put you immediately in touch with an invaluable source of feedback and knowledge: your fellow students. Most importantly, it can target your portfolio at an industry that's always on the move, tempering your ambition with ever-changing realities. For those with a general desire to make games, unsure of either how or where to do so, the good news is that ever more universities are finding the right balance of overview and specialisation. Studios like nothing

more than awareness, versatility and a demonstrable willingness to learn, making the broad, modular nature of a modern design course ideal. And, as you're about to discover, few are more skeptical of a simple grade and a piece of paper than the universities themselves, the degree itself now the least important thing you'll walk away with.

In this section, some of the foremost tutors and recruitment experts in the UK describe what it takes to teach, learn and succeed within games. Faced with their own needs to adapt and develop skills, they inform the crucial first steps that can shape everything to come. Fresh from the frontline, we also ask a recent graduate for her impressions of the latest courses, which in this case have led to a fulfilling job within an up-and-coming UK studio. Your favourite game makers have told you what they expect; now find out how to give it to them.



GET YOURSELF A CREATIVE FUTURE AT QANTM

COURSES AVAILABLE:

GAME DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT
3D ANIMATION
AUDIO PRODUCTION
GRAPHIC DESIGN
WEB DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

DIPLOMA | DEGREE* | MASTERS*

*Accredited by Middlesex University

0845 017 1015

WWW.QANTM.COM

 **qantm**
COLLEGE

FURTHER EDUCATION

THE STUDENT VIEW

Why sitting through the intros and tutorials is still good practice

With a BA (Hons) in Game Design at Staffordshire University, Sarah Jones has already landed a job doing precisely that for London's Asylum Entertainment. So impressed was she by the structure and relevance of her degree that she's now undertaking her Masters thesis, indulging a love of design documentation she discovered while at uni. Thinking back and forward, she describes to us the increased wisdom of Britain's education system in providing options first and specialties later, always in sync with industry practices and trends.

Why the videogame industry?

I was actually originally going to do an English-related degree, as I write a lot of stones. But the prospects of becoming a published author are quite small, so my parents suggested, "Why don't you try doing something that still has story writing but contains something else?" So what else did I like doing? Computer games – there you go. I spent ages researching the programmes and stuff; I remember reading one tutorial on how to make Lara Croft in 3D. And I played loads.

So you had your parents' blessing?

Yeah. They seemed happier with me doing games than being some crazy writing lady. Halfway through the course I had to say, "You know, my chances aren't that much better with games design." But it turned out fine. I ended up with a job in the end. I've been working since May as a freelance game designer at Asylum Entertainment in London.

I'm supposed to be doing my masters thesis, as well – I've written the introduction, at least. It's based on design documents, finding the ideal structure for them based on what's out there and trying to implement a theory I came up with in the third year about balancing story and gameplay.

Have avenues into gaming such as modding and self-tuition reduced the attractiveness of attending university?

The huge, huge thing about uni is that you move out of your parents' house – you go off on your own and look after yourself. You're dealing with new places and new people and most importantly yourself. There are

always people on forums when you're at home, but you're not talking to them directly and you might not always word your request correctly. You can't just ask someone to come over. We've had so many people to ask to play through a level or check a render to see if the angles and lighting are OK.

I do approve of modding communities because it does teach you to work in a team, and if you don't get your stuff done it slows down everyone else. You get that at uni as well. At Staffordshire, they had to create a design document for their own original concept, but they weren't allowed to have robots or zombies or pirates. They came up with some funky ideas; some groups got it and some groups didn't. And in the second semester they have to make a level and cutscene from that design doc, so they learn that, if a person making the level hasn't imported the assets, they can't put in anything else. And the texturer can't work unless the model's made.

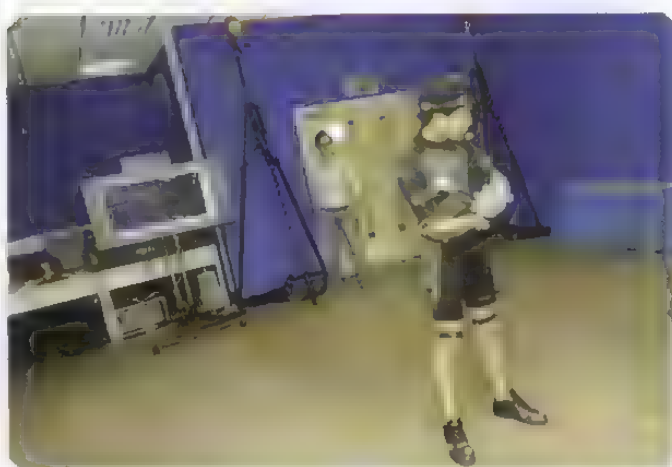
When did you realise that what you were studying was going to bear fruit?

I love narratology, and having discovered a love of design documents. I knew, after the second year, that I could select modules that would refine my knowledge of that.

"IT'S HARD TO GET PLACEMENTS IN THE INDUSTRY BECAUSE OF THE SECRECY THING, SO THEY CAN'T TAKE YOU ON FOR

There are some really good modules in the first and second year now, so if you do want to do game design you can focus on narratology, or handheld game design. Or, if you want to explore Hammer and how to use game engines, you can do that. So after the first year you learn to focus your studies. There's also a marketing module in the third year now.

It's hard to get placements in the industry, though, because of the big secrecy thing. Big games take two-and-a-half years, so they can't take you on for anything other than testing because of confidentiality. Rare, I think, do a placement programme for a year, but that's for programmers



Did Staffordshire University selectively license Hammer?

I think they wanted to use Unreal at one point but they're using Hammer now in the second and third year. It's quite a nice engine because you can import things and manipulate them quite a bit. One group got hold of code which turned *Half Life* into a strategy game, top-down with little things bouncing around, and you could command



Those looking into studying games are advised to assess the technical facilities of prospective colleges and universities. Not every unit offers a motion-capture setup, for example.

where they went. So there are more modding tools available and we have a couple of lecturers who know the engine really well. It helps you understand that sometimes they can be easy, sometimes hard.

What ambitions do you have now?

At the moment I'm working on a game I've been given to look at, and I'm being given guidelines and structures on how it should be. But I'd like to design and create my own idea, work within a team to make it, and not rely on others to come up with the concepts. I don't think I'll be getting into a position where I own my own company – I'm not that good with business.



SARAH JONES
STUDENT (BA HONS GAME DESIGN,
STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY)/
FREELANCE GAME DESIGNER
(ASYLUM ENTERTAINMENT)

In association with
qantm
amikus

FURTHER EDUCATION

THE HUDDERSFIELD WAY

One university with a close understanding of real-world game making



Huddersfield's facilities are among the best in the UK for students wanting to sample the diversity of tools used in modern codeshops

In meeting the challenge of offering practical, relevant experience to budding designers and engineers, University of Huddersfield didn't just listen to the industry, it copied it. Its integrated Canalside Studios, visited in this issue's Region Specific section, is manufacturing everything from tomorrow's talent to the processes it's expected to know and the games it aspires to create. Course leader **Ruth Taylor** explains how it works

Much has been said of the disparity between what's taught at universities and what developers actually need. What's your opinion?

The important thing to keep in mind is that we're all seeking the same outcome, that is,

on the cutting edge of new technology. UK university computing schools like Huddersfield have successfully provided computer science courses for many years and are also home to research and innovation in computing.

The move by universities to provide specifically targeted courses has been a response to the industry's needs and the demand from young people to study in an exciting and challenging area. To do this successfully requires good communication. At Huddersfield, we've been fortunate enough to have the help and advice of the region's game companies and professionals, we see these partnerships as essential in helping our understanding of the industry's needs and enabling us to review and adapt what we teach and how we teach it.

"IT'S QUITE DIFFICULT TO TAKE THE MENTAL STEP OF PICTURING YOURSELF WORKING NOT ON THE NEXT GTA, BUT ON A GAME AIMED AT EIGHT-YEAR-OLDS"

successful and capable graduates who can fill the workforce needs of industry, have the creative talent and ability to innovate, and who, over time, will continue the success of the industry in the UK. The industry's obviously highly demanding in its need for skilled and qualified workers – after all, it's

At a time when modding is increasingly touted as a good route into gaming, what experience can a student exclusively acquire at university?

It provides a student with access to huge resources, from library and research facilities to equipment and software. There are lots of things you'd be able to experiment with at Huddersfield that you wouldn't have access to at home, such as motion capture and VR. It can be a little daunting at first finding your way around and learning to make the most of what's available, but the experience should be rich and rewarding.

And the people you'll work with are as valuable an asset: your peer group, friends on your course who share your ambition. You'll have experienced lecturers who will seek to challenge and inspire you and support your learning, helping you develop your individual skills and talents.

Generally speaking, is there too much theory in game education at present?

No, I don't think so. University should provide a balanced education, it's more than a training course and that's why theoretical underpinning is so important. University

learning seeks to address two things: knowledge and abilities. Concentrating on the theoretical aspects of each subject provides a solid understanding of core principles which a student is expected to apply in practice.

As an example, you could build a 3D character model that looks great and is attractively textured, well-lit, etc, but if you haven't taken into account basic theory it could be useless in a game engine. It might be inefficient with too many polys, or have hidden faults in the mesh that are disguised by the texture. It might be difficult to rig, or might animate badly because vertices aren't aligned in the right places. Theory isn't there to slow you down – it's important at the simplest level in supporting good practice and fostering an ability to innovate and move learning forward.

Do students and applicants generally understand the truth behind the many myths associated with making games?

Well, it varies. I think most students understand that it's a very competitive industry and that developers are looking for a high level of skill and commitment, and that they'll have to work hard to achieve that. There will be some students who only want to make the sort of games they enjoy playing and don't fully appreciate the diversity of the market and audiences. It's quite difficult to take the mental step of picturing yourself working not on the next GTA or Halo, but modelling incidental props for a game aimed at eight-year-old girls who like Barbie. It's also common to see students at the start of a course wanting to be good at everything. It takes a while to find your feet and focus on a particular area, and start to develop the skills and polish that will make you stand out from the crowd. Students need to get a feel for the range of possibilities that the industry offers and then understand how and where they can best apply their talents and specialise.

What kinds of industry tools and software do you currently use?

We have well-equipped computer labs. The particular specification of machines in each room will relate to the classes that are held there, and typically the games labs have the

As part of Huddersfield University, Canalside Studios has published a number of titles, including *Buck Sterling* and *The Quest For The Golden Ank*





RUTH TAYLOR
COURSE LEADER/SENIOR LECTURER
HUDDERSFIELD UNIVERSITY

Association with



highest-specced machines with dual-monitors for debugging, etc. We have dedicated graphics labs where students can use scanners, graphics tablets and software including 3D Studio Max, ZBrush, and the range of Adobe and Macromedia tools. Other facilities for the artists include access to green screen and motion capture.

Programmers will start off with Java XNA, C# and then Microsoft Visual Studio for C++, and also use things like RenderMonkey for shaders. We're currently setting up a new games lab which will include Xboxes for the students to build and test their games on – though we wouldn't encourage students to think in terms of a single platform. They can develop projects using a variety of SDK and homebrew kits, and interface devices such as the Wii Remote. It's important for us to keep facilities as up-to-date as possible and a equipment and software is replaced and upgraded on a rolling programme. And we'll always listen to suggestions from students for tools and equipment they'd find useful for their studies.

What prompted Huddersfield to mimic the commercial model for game development with its BSc in Computer Games Programming?

Understanding and actively taking part in production is one of the best ways for students to learn about games. Our students tell us this is one of the most challenging things we ask of them – and one of the things they enjoy most about studying with us. Traditional university teaching focuses on discrete areas of learning which a student may be required to synthesise as an individual project. Whilst we still provide specialised modules across the range of subjects, we now provide team-based project environments where students on different courses – BSc Computer Games Programming and BA Computer Games Design – work together to build functioning games and prototypes. This satisfies a number of demands that would not normally be met – it enables artists and programmers to work together to produce more varied and larger-scale projects than they could do individually, or without access to a multidisciplinary team. And it creates an



environment where we can teach and implement teamwork and develop an appreciation of formal production processes and values.

We've learned a lot from running our own in-house studio where we currently have placement students working on a title for XBLA, and a new team just starting out on developing new game concepts. By

guarantee students a placement, though we do have a dedicated unit where staff liaise with companies and promote placement opportunities. Students on placement are supported through continuing contact with the university, both through the placement unit and from their visiting tutor.

A placement is a real job for 12 months so students who want to take advantage of



extending this to provide production-based teaching for all our students, we believe we're providing the best possible environment to learn about making games.

What's the nature of professional placements within the course? Do they establish a long-term relationship between the studio and the student?

All our courses offer an optional sandwich year after the second year, and students then return for a final year at university. Anyone taking this route must complete a 12-month placement with a company. We don't

it have to develop strong skills and a good portfolio during their first two years of study. We have an excellent track record at Huddersfield of student placement, and we're one of the top providers of sandwich education in the UK. The ongoing relationship between placement students and the company they work for is as important to us as to the student. Many of the companies we work with take students each year and it's not uncommon for students returning on final year to already be signed up by their placement company before they graduate.

Canalside Studios' upcoming projects include action-focused work and more strategic fare, such as *Hexothermic*.



Huddersfield's methodology involves a strict adherence to game-making theory, but its approach to practical work is taken equally as seriously.

FURTHER EDUCATION

QANTM COLLEGE

An option to consider before you press start



NIC OLIVER
MARKETING MANAGER
QANTM UK



qantm

COLLEGE



ware of the stigma surrounding training institutes and unrecognised diplomas. Qantm College London is keen to stress its unique position aside from traditional learning. Having expanded from its native Australia to offices around the globe, many positioned in development hubs, it enjoys an intimate relationship with both games and new media, its facilities mirroring those at use in the

What is Qantm's history?

Qantm started in Australia in the mid-'90s. It was formed originally by a group of Australian universities that needed a specialist college for running multimedia courses. In 2004, there were some issues with the college and the SAE group bought it out, becoming the operator in Australia. Because of SAE's international presence, we started to introduce Qantm alongside our SAE locations around the world. So it started in Brisbane, moved to Melbourne and Sydney, and has since moved to places like Berlin and London. We'll soon be opening in Tokyo.

Where between a university and a training institute does Qantm lie?

Qantm as a whole is very specialised – it's hard to pinpoint relative to other types of training. The main comparison would be a university, really, in the educational sense. In terms of facilities and style, it could really only be compared to an industry training facility. Qantm does the diplomas, degrees and masters courses that a university would do, but it has the facilities that only a high-end studio or commercial entity would have. It's like a hybrid.

Can a private institute match the scope of a university education?

We have our industry advisory boards, head lecturers and course coordinators. The way we handle the academic side of things is that we're validated through Middlesex University for our course programmes. They allow quite a lot of flexibility for the content as they appreciate we're the specialists and that our

industry. Most of its lecturers and speakers come fresh from modern development, though all recognise the need to refine and update their own skills before passing them on to others. Offering his perspective on Qantm's courses and philosophy, marketing manager **Nic Oliver** tells us more.

staff are the ones with industry experience. Universities might also make you major and minor in subjects whereas at Qantm you only earn what you've gone there to learn. So if you're doing a 3D animation course, you won't be doing a History or Geography minor. And the degrees and diplomas are

In association with

qantm
amiquo

accelerated, so you could have a BA (Hons) in two years. We're not cutting out the content the universities would give, we're cutting out the three or so months of holiday.

How popular are the courses? Do you need to expand?

We do. The London office is already looking to expand in 2009 because of the interest. Brisbane is one of our larger sites and even they've expanded recently. Whilst some universities are doing a very good job, people find it hard sifting through all those bad universities to get to everyone else. Qantm sits to the side of everyone else – it's just there – with a well-respected government and industry reputation.

Do the courses exploit Qantm's global network?

On quite a large scale, yes. You could do your first year in London and second in Brisbane, or Singapore. You have that option to transfer. That's what you'd call a 'cool thing', I suppose, because it's not really about the education. But in Byron Bay, for example, we had Ramon Rivera [animation director for the Lord Of The Rings movies] who we sent around to all the different colleges, and he did a week of lecturing in each college. So it's not a case of having that same lecturer right the way through. We also do web seminars that make use of our international offices, so someone in LA or Glasgow could have a web conference viewed by all our colleges around the world.

Do you still have time to help candidates get a job?

When organising graduate positions, we have a number of areas that allow for that. We have a global HR portal/social site called mySAE.org, which is there for students, graduates and alumni. Similar to Facebook, maybe, but more of a work networking thing. So we have major companies coming to us advertising exclusively on there, avoiding recruitment agencies.

When it comes down to full-time jobs our lecturers do help place them but it's as much, if not more, down to the student. Any college or university that says otherwise is mis-selling themselves. If we were to go to a studio and say, "We've got this student

that's interested in this position," 90 per cent of the time they'd tell them to get off their arse and express that interest themselves. Sure, we can reiterate their skills and everything, but if they don't have the energy or drive to apply they probably don't have it for working in that area.

Which other lecturers and speakers have you had at Qantm?

We've got Miles Glynn at the moment, who's teaching our Modelling Digital Environments module – he's worked on projects like Harry Potter and Sunshine. Jason Colman is our head of games. We also have Alex Whittaker from Beautiful Games Studio [Championship Manager] who came in and reviewed student works. We're looking at bringing in Paul Steed [id Software], who's a very well-respected game designer, he's

We're working with FMOD for our game audio production, and Dell is a strong partner for the computers we're buying – every student receives a Dell laptop to keep. With things like game engines we do work with a number of companies. So we're using the Trinigy game engine in our studios around the world, and we're exploring XNA – though our main focus is on students learning the craft from the ground up. Unreal Editor's being taught as part of our level design course and various things like that.

What's next for Qantm?

[Laughs] All very top secret. There's a new course being announced in a week's time which will be an industry-leading course, the first of its kind in the country and possibly the world. It'll be a big announcement but I can't tell you what yet.

"WE'VE GOT MILES GLYNN AT THE

moment, who's teaching our Modelling Digital Environments module – he's worked on projects like Harry Potter and Sunshine.

probably coming in mid-October time.

Qantm's attended several events aimed at the 14- to 19-year-old age group. Is there a skills shortage you're addressing?

Very much so. Qantm's always trying to think two years ahead. Universities have fixed their courses based on what they figured out when these issues were originally mentioned. So in two years they'll be putting out graduates but there won't be any positions for them. There'll be an abundance of them for only a certain amount of industry positions. So what we teach now is what we think the industry will require in two years time, and that's based on industry trends in different countries and our own advisory board. That's obviously exaggerated with regards to the Skills London and BBC Blast events, because we're going there to really get them from a younger age and show them why maths and physics are really relevant to 3D games.

What technological partners do you have within the industry?



One of Qantm's tech partners is Dell, which supplies the laptops that each student is able to keep.

FURTHER EDUCATION

CODE BASE

Lessons in putting two and two (and students and industry) together



JASON COLEMAN
HEAD LECTURER
QANTM UK

Jason Coleman is the head lecturer of Qantm's Game Design and Development course, a one-year diploma designed to prime students of mixed experience for entry-level positions. Catching up with him at Microsoft's XNA Gamefest event, we asked him to teach us the basics

What did you do before Qantm?

I've been a C++ programmer since '96. I'd worked in lots of industries but I always loved games programming, and started my own business selling shareware games. Then I started working as a games programmer at a company called .deaworks3D. They're quite well regarded, I think - they do ports for mobile phones of games like *Final Fantasy VII*, *Dirge Of Cerberus* and *PGR3*. Then the opportunity to teach at Qantm turned up

people who want to get a career in the games industry, some who want a change of career. Most of them really love games but haven't had any experience programming. So we've gone from first principles with a lot of the students this year, because we're a small place we can be very flexible.

How do you ensure that newcomers get the training they need while no one is held back?

We actually split it into two classes, one being a C++ boot camp while the other's for people who've done stuff like Flash or Actionscript already.

Do you use much middleware?

The games people write are obviously quite simple - they have to be small in scope

"WE HOPE STUDENTS ARE EMPLOYABLE AT ENTRY-LEVEL POSITIONS BY THE END OF THE YEAR - IT DEPENDS HOW MUCH EFFORT THEY PUT INTO PORTFOLIOS"

The thing I'd always liked as a programmer was being able to teach people, and having been a programmer for a number of years I decided to jump in. I hadn't had any formal teacher training or anything but I love it.

What's your range of students like?

It ranges from school-leavers to people in their mid-30s, a couple in their 40s. It's

because I want them to do finished games rather than something that's too ambitious. The idea of the course is for them to build up this portfolio they can use to get into the industry. So we don't use middleware as far as possible because we want to understand exactly what's going on. We use the odd library like SDL - that's good for getting started. But we try to write all the code ourselves as far as possible. Maybe we'll look at middleware in the future.

Do you recognise a need for general skills rather than specialised ones?

We have the modular stuff for the course obviously, but it's basically split in two. We do concentrate on C++ because we want students to be employable. It's why we don't use Java or anything like that. So we do that but we also do a kind of general software practice. Once the students are past the C++ crash course we have two modules: Games Programming and Games Systems Design. The latter's more generally applicable software engineering like design patterns, general object-oriented design and well-known solutions to common problems.

How long is the course?

The diploma is one year split into three trimesters, each of 12 weeks with a week at the end called project week where the students give presentations and sit exams. We hope the students are employable at junior entry-level positions by the end of the year - I suppose it depends on how much effort they put in on their portfolios. The idea is that they'll have a couple of 2D arcade games and a clutch of 3D demos. It would be asking quite a lot to ask for full 3D games.

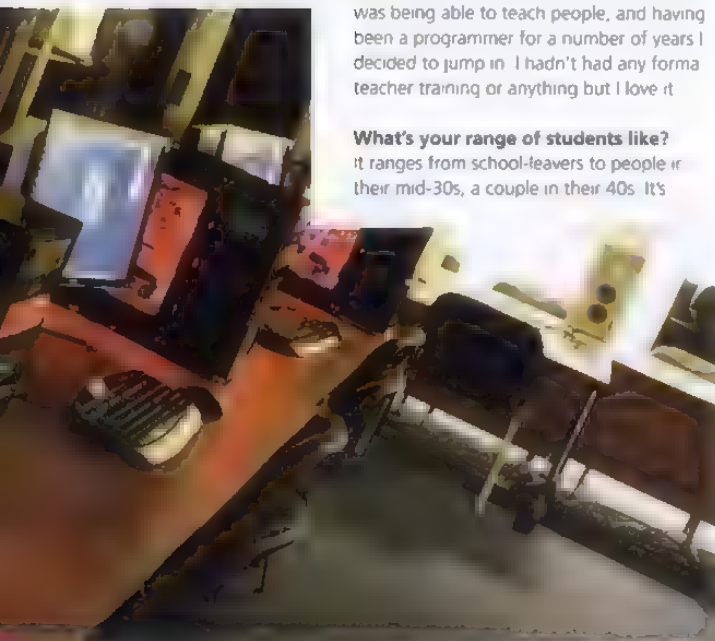
What we like to encourage is for them to work as a team. We started this course in January and the fastest students have just finished - they were the ones who'd already done some programming. And we also run a 3D animation course. What was nice is that one of the programmers collaborated with a couple of 3D animators from that other course.

How much is this a learning experience for you as well as them?

That's kind of a concern for me, actually. I'm not in the industry any more - how am I going to keep up? Luckily, I'm always being dragged off to things like this XNA Gamefest event. And the other aspect, of course, is that I'm also learning how to be a teacher. So the students are learning how to do my job while I'm learning to teach them - it's kinda fun.

Are new models like XNA something you're trying to exploit?

I'm very wary of things like getting the students to do C# - it doesn't make them very employable. But we do these workshops that are open to anyone, and we've been using Visual Studio Express for those. They've got this thing called DarkGDK which is written by The Games Creators, the guys who do FPS Creator. It's completely open to people who can just walk in off the street - they don't have to enroll in college. What I've found is that Dark gets people up and running with making games very quickly. And it's a free download, so there's absolutely nothing stopping you getting into making games for free. XNA could be one of those things we also do workshops on.





STAFFORDSHIRE
UNIVERSITY

advantage you

Get yourself one up on the competition with a game degree from Staffordshire University

Degrees in

Acad's Game and Simulator Development

Computer Games Programming

Game Artificial Intelligence

Multiplayer Online Games Programming

Portable Games Programming

Computer Games Design

Computer Games Design And Programming

Games Concept Design

Multiplayer Online Games Design

For more details: enquiries@staff.ac.uk or <http://www.staff.ac.uk/games>

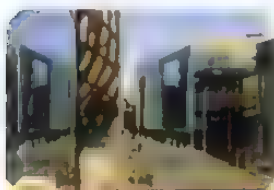


■ CREATE THE DIFFERENCE ■

FURTHER EDUCATION

UK COURSE LISTING 2009

Game education available at a key selection of universities and colleges



UNIVERSITY OF ABERTAY DUNDEE

School of Computing and Creative Technologies
Bell Street
Dundee
DD1 1HG
01382 308600
cct@abertay.ac.uk
www.abertay.ac.uk

- Game Art and Animation (MA)
Two years full-time/three years sandwich
- Computer Games Technology (MSc)
Two years full-time/three years sandwich

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY (FORMERLY UNIVERSITY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH)

Old College
King Street
Aberystwyth
Ceredigion
SY23 2AX
01970 622021
01970 627410
lg-admissions@aber.ac.uk
www.aber.ac.uk

- Computer Graphics, Vision and Games (BSc Hons)
- Three years full-time/four years sandwich



ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

He more Building
East Road
Cambridge
CB1 1PT
0845 271 3333
admissions@anglia.ac.uk
www.anglia.ac.uk

- Computer Games and Visual Effects (BA)
Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

Park Square
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU1 3JU
01582 489286
admissions@beds.ac.uk
www.beds.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

BLACKPOOL AND THE FYLDE COLLEGE

Ashfield Road
Bispham
Blackpool
Lancaster
FY2 0HB
01253 504346
admissions@blackpool.ac.uk
www.blackpool.ac.uk

- Game Design and Development (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF BOLTON

Deane Road
Bolton
BL3 5AB
01204 900600
enquiries@bolton.ac.uk
www.bolton.ac.uk

- Computer Games Software Development (BSc Hons/HND)
Two to four years full-time
- Creative Technologies (BSc Hons/HND)
Two to three and a half years full-time
- Games Art (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Games Design (BSc Hons/HND)
Two to three years full-time

BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Talbot Campus
Fern Barrow
Poole
Dorset
BH12 5BB
01202 961916
ask@enquiries@bournemouth.ac.uk
www.bournemouth.ac.uk

- Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Media Technology (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich

UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

Richmond Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 1DP
0800 073 1225
course-enquiries@bradford.ac.uk
www.bradford.ac.uk

- Design for Computer Games (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Interactive Systems and Video Games Design (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

BRADFORD COLLEGE

Great Horton Road
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD7 1AY
01274 433333
admissions@bradfordcollege.ac.uk
www.bradfordcollege.ac.uk

- Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

Mithras House
Lewes Road
Brighton
BN2 4AT
01273 644644
admissions@brighton.ac.uk
www.brighton.ac.uk

- Computer Science (Games) (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Computing (Computer Games Development) (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND, BRISTOL

Frenchay Campus
Coldharbour Lane
Bristol
BS16 1QY
0117 32 83333
admissions@uwe.ac.uk
www.uwe.ac.uk

- Games Technology (Hon BSc)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Games Technology (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE NEW UNIVERSITY

Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
Bucks
HP11 2JZ
01494 605060
admissions@bnc.ac.uk
www.bucks.ac.uk

- Digital Games Design (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time
- Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF WALES INSTITUTE, CARDIFF

PO Box 377
Llandaff Campus
Western Avenue
Cardiff
CF5 2SG
029 2041 6070
admissions@uwic.ac.uk
www.uwic.ac.uk

- Mobile, Web & Game Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE

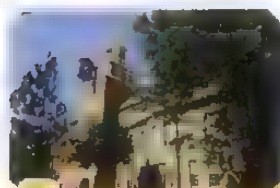
Preston
Lancs
PR1 2HE
01772 201201
uadmissions@uclan.ac.uk
www.uclan.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time
- Computer Games Development (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time
- Games Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Multimedia Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

CHESTERFIELD COLLEGE

Infirmay Road
Chesterfield
S41 7NG
01246 500562
advice@chesterfield.ac.uk
www.chesterfield.ac.uk

- Games and Interactive Technologies (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time



CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB

Undergraduate course:
+44 (0)20 7040 8406
ugenquire@soi.city.ac.uk
www.soi.city.ac.uk

Postgraduate course:
+44 (0)20 7040 0248
pginfo@soi.city.ac.uk
www.soi.city.ac.uk/edge

- Computer Science with Games Technology (BSc)
Three years full-time/
four years with one
year placement
- Computer Games Technology (MSc)
One year full-time or
part-time up to 28 months

CITY COLLEGE MANCHESTER

PO Box 40
Manchester
M23 0GN
0800 013 0123
admissions@ccm.ac.uk
www.ccm.ac.uk

- Games Design (FdG FdA)
Two years full-time

COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

The Student Centre
Coventry University
1 Gulson Rd
Coventry
CV1 2JH
024 7615 2222
studentenquiries@coventry.ac.uk
www.coventry.ac.uk

- Games Technology (MSci Hons)
Three years full-time/four
years sandwich

UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA

Fusehill Street
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 2HH
01228 616234
www.cumbria.ac.uk

- Art of Games Design (FdG FdA)
Two years full-time

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY

The Gateway
Leicester
LE1 9BH
0116 255 1551
enquiries@dmu.ac.uk
www.dmu.ac.uk

- Computer Games Programming (BSc Hons)
Four years sandwich
- Electronic Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time
- Game Art Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time



UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

Kedleston Road
Derby
DE22 1GB
01332 591896
games@derby.ac.uk
www.derby.ac.uk/
computing

- Computer Games Modelling & Animation (BA Hons)
Three years, or four with
optional placement year
- Computer Games Programming (BSc Hons)
Four years, including
one year placement

DONCASTER COLLEGE

The Hub
Chappell Drive
South Yorkshire
DN1 2RF
01302 553610
he@don.ac.uk
www.don.ac.uk

- Animation and Games Art (FdG FdA)
Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

Docklands Campus
University Way
London
E16 2RD
020 8223 2835
admissions@uel.ac.uk
www.uel.ac.uk

- Business Studies/Computer Games Design (BA/BSc Hons)
Three years full-time
- Computer Games Design (BA/BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time
- Computer Games Technologies (BSc)
Three years full-time
- Graphic Design with Computer Games Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Multi media with Computer Games Design (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

Wivenhoe Park
Colchester
Essex
CO4 3SQ
01206 873666
admit@essex.ac.uk
www.essex.ac.uk

- Computer Games (BSc)
Three years full-time



UNIVERSITY OF GLAMORGAN

Enquiries and Admissions Unit
Pontypridd
CF37 1DL
0800 716925
enquiries@glam.ac.uk
www.glam.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/
four years sandwich

GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY

City Campus
Cowcaddens Road
Glasgow
G4 0BA
0141 331 3000
admissions@gcal.ac.uk
www.qcal.ac.uk

- Computer Games (BSc Hons)
Four years full-time/five
years sandwich
- Games Software Development (BSc Hons)
One year full-time

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Hardwick Campus
St Paul's Road
Cheltenham
GL50 4BS
01242 714501
admissions@glos.ac.uk
www.glos.ac.uk

- interactive Games Design (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich



GOLDSMITHS

University of London
New Cross
London
SE14 6NW
02079197171
Email: Prof Frederic Leymarie, ffl@gold.ac.uk
www.goldsmiths.ac.uk

- Computer Games & Entertainment (MSc)
One year full-time/two years part-time

UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

Greenwich Campus
Old Royal Naval College
Park Row
London
SE10 9LS
0800 005 006
courseinfo@gre.ac.uk
www.gre.ac.uk

- Computing with Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Games & Entertainment Systems Software Engineering (BEng Hons/MEng/BSc)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich
- Games and Multimedia Technologies (BSc/BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich

HEREFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS

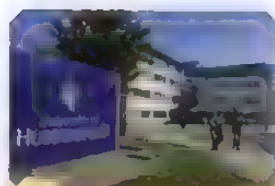
Folly Lane
Hereford
HR1 1LT
01432 845327
undergrad@hca.ac.uk
www.hca.ac.uk

- Animation (FdG FdA)
Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

University Admissions Service
College Lane
Hatfield
Herts
AL10 9AB
01707 284800
www.herts.ac.uk

- 3D Games Art (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Games and Graphics Hardware Technology (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time



UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
Design: Ruth Taylor
01484 473378
Programming: Duke Gledhill
01484 472758
dig.talmedia@hud.ac.uk
dig.talmedia@hud.ac.uk/undergraduate

- Computer Games Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
 - Computer Games Programming (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- For more info, see also p120, p140 and p172**



UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Department of Computer Science
Cotttingham Road
Hull
HU6 7RX
+44 (0) 1482 465951
admissions@dcshull.ac.uk
www.dcs.hull.ac.uk

- Computer Science with Games Development (BSc Hons/MEng)
Three years/four years full-time
- Games Programming (MSc)
One year full-time

HULL COLLEGE

Queen's Gardens
Hull
HU1 3DG
01482 329943
info@hull-college.ac.uk
www.hull-college.ac.uk

- Games Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time

KINGSTON UNIVERSITY

Student Information & Advice Centre
Cooper House
40-46 Surbiton Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 2HX
020 8547 7053
aps@kingston.ac.uk
www.kingston.ac.uk

- Computer Science (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich
- Games Technology (BSc Hons) (modular)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich

LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Course Enquiries Office
Civic Quarter
Leeds
LS1 3HE
0113 81 23113
course-enquiries@leedsmet.ac.uk
www.leedsmet.ac.uk

- Games Design (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Admissions
Brayford Pool
Lincoln
LN6 7TS
01522 886097
admissions@lincoln.ac.uk
www.lincoln.ac.uk

- Computer Games Production (BSc Hons/Deg MComp)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich
- Games Computing (BSc Hons/Deg MComp)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

Roscoe Court
4 Rodney Street
Liverpool
L1 2TZ
0151 231 5090
recruitment@ljmu.ac.uk
www.ljmu.ac.uk

- Computer Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Four years sandwich

In association with

qantm
amiquis



LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Admissions Office

166-220 Holloway Road
London
N7 8DB

020 7133 4200

admissions@londonmet.ac.uk

Course leader Fiona French
french@londonmet.ac.uk
www.londonmet.ac.uk
www.thinkmakeplay.co.uk

- Computer Games, in association with Gamelab London (BSc)
Three years full-time, four+ years part-time
Two pathways available
Technical and Design

LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

103 Borough Road
London

SE1 0AA

020 7815 7815

www.sbu.ac.uk

- Games Culture (BA Hons)
Three years full-time

MANCHESTER COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Openshaw Campus

Ashton Old Road

Openshaw

Manchester

M11 2WH

0800 068 8585

enquiries@mancat.ac.uk

www.mancat.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design and Development (FdG FdA)
Three years full-time

MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Admissions Office

All Saints Building

All Saints

Manchester

M15 6BH

0161 247 2000

www.mmu.ac.uk

- Artificial Intelligence (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Computer Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY

Hendon Campus

The Burroughs

Hendon

London

NW4 4BT

020 8411 5555

enquiries@mdx.ac.uk

www.mdx.ac.uk

- Computing Graphics and Games (BSc Hons)
Three/four years full-time
- Computer Science (BSc Hons)
Three/four years full-time

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

6 Kensington Terrace

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 7RL

0191 222 5594

enquiries@ncl.ac.uk

www.ncl.ac.uk

- Computing Science (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time

NEW COLLEGE NOTTINGHAM

Adams Building

Stoney Street

The Lace Market

Nottingham

NG1 1NG

0115 910 0100

enquiries@ncn.ac.uk

www.ncn.ac.uk

- Multi-media (FdG FdA)
Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF WALES, NEWPORT

Caerleon Campus

PO Box 101

Newport

South Wales

NP18 3YH

01633 432030

admissions@newport.ac.uk

www.newport.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design (BA Hons)
Three years full-time
- Games Development & Artificial Intelligence (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

NORWICH SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN

Francis House

3-7 Redwell Street

Norwich

NR2 4SN

01603 610561

admissions@nsad.ac.uk

www.nsad.ac.uk

- Games Art and Design (BA Hons/FdG FdA)
One to two years full-time

NORTHBROOK COLLEGE SUSSEX

Littlehampton Road

Goring by Sea

Worthing

West Sussex

BN12 6NJ

0845 155 6060

enquiries@nbc.ac.uk

www.northbrook.ac.uk

- Games Design (Development) (FdG FdSc)
Two years full-time

NORTH EAST WALES INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Plas Coch

Mold Road

Wrexham

LL11 2AW

01978 293439

SID@new.ac.uk

www.new.ac.uk

- Design Digital Art for Computer Games (BA Hons)
Three years full-time

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY

Trinity Building

Northumberland Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 8ST

0191 243 7420

enquiries@northumbria.ac.uk

www.northumbria.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design and Production (BSc Hons)
Four years sandwich
- Computer Games Software Engineering (BSc Hons)
Four years sandwich

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE AND HINCKLEY COLLEGE

Hinckley Road

Nuneaton

Warwickshire

CV11 6BH

024 7624 3000

jacqueline.spencer@nwhc.ac.uk

www.nwhc.ac.uk

- Games Development (HND)
Two years full-time

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Dryden Centre
Burton Street
Nottingham
NG1 4BU
0115 941 8418
admissions@ntu.ac.uk
www.ntu.ac.uk

- Computer Science (Games Technology) (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich

UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Drake Circus
Plymouth
PL4 8AA
01752 588037
admissions@plymouth.ac.uk
www.plymouth.ac.uk

- Computing and Games Development (BSc Hons)
One year full-time

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

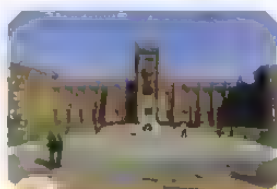
Tavistock Place
Plymouth
PL4 8AT
01752 203434
enquiries@pcad.ac.uk
www.pcad.ac.uk

- Design for Games (BA Hons/Fdg FdA)
One to two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Academic Registry
University House
Winston Churchill Avenue
Portsmouth
PO1 2UP
023 9284 8484
admissions@port.ac.uk
www.port.ac.uk

- Computer Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Enterprise in Computer Games Technology (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

University Road
Belfast
BT7 1NN
Northern Ireland
028 9097 2727
admissions@qub.ac.uk
www.qub.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design and Development (MEng)
Four years full-time/five years sandwich

RAVENSBOROUGH COLLEGE OF DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION

Walden Road
Chislehurst
Kent
BR7 5SN
020 8289 4900
info@rave.ac.uk
www.rave.ac.uk

- Animation (BA Hons)
One year full-time

UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD

Salford
M5 4WT
0161 295 4545
ugadmissions-exrel@salford.ac.uk
www.salford.ac.uk

- Computer and Video Games (BSc Hons)
Three years full-time

SAE INSTITUTE

United House
North Road
London
N7 9DP
020 7609 2653
saelondon@sae.edu
www.sae.edu

- Games Programming (BSc Hons)
Two years full-time

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

City Campus
Howard Street
Sheffield
S1 1WB
0114 225 5555
admissions@shu.ac.uk
www.shu.ac.uk

- Computer Games (MComp Hons)
Four years full-time/five years sandwich
- Games Design (BA Hons)
Four years full-time
- Games Software Development (BSc Hons)
Four years sandwich

SOMERSET COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Wellington Road
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 5AX
01823 366331
enquiries@somerset.ac.uk
www.somerset.ac.uk/student-area/considering-a-degree.html

- Enterprise in Computer Games Technology (Fdg FdSc)
Two years full-time

SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT UNIVERSITY

East Park Terrace
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0RT
023 8031 9039
admissions@solent.ac.uk or
enquiries@so
www.solent.ac.uk

- Computer and Video Games (BA Hons)
Three to four years full-time
- Computer Games Development (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time/four to five years sandwich
- Sound for Film, Television and Games (BSc Hons)
Three to four years full-time

SOUTH EAST ESSEX COLLEGE

Laker Road
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS1 1ND
01702 220500
Admissions@southend.ac.uk
www.southend.ac.uk

- Games Development and Digital Imaging (BA Hons)
Three years full-time

SOUTH NOTTINGHAM COLLEGE

West Bridgford Centre
Greythorn Drive
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7GA
0115 914 6400
enquiries@south-nottingham.ac.uk
www.snc.ac.uk

- Games Art and Design (Fdg FdA)
Two years full-time



ST HELENS COLLEGE

University Of Huddersfield
Brook Street
St Helens
Merseyside
WA10 1PZ
01744 733766
enquiries@sthelens.ac.uk
www.sthelens.ac.uk

- Computer Game Design (FdA)
Two years full-time
- Entertainment Media Design (BA Hons)
Third year top up



STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

The Recruitment Centre
 Faculty of Computing
 Engineering and
 Technology
 Beaconside
 Stafford
 ST18 0AD
 01785 353461
 a.r.pownall@staffs.ac.uk
 www.staffs.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design (BSc Hons/MEng/BEng Hons) Three years full-time/four years w/ placement
- Computer Games Programming (BSc Hons/MEng/BEng Hons) Three years full-time/four years w/ placement
- Multiplayer Online Game Programming (BSc Hons/MEng/BEng Hons) Three years full-time/four years w/ placement

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY REGIONAL FEDERATION

College Road
 Stoke on Trent
 ST4 2DE
 01782 292753
 admissions@staffs.ac.uk
 www.surf.ac.uk

- Computer Games Programming (HND) Two years full-time
- Media Technology Games Design (HND) Two years full-time

UNIVERSITY CAMPUS SUFFOLK

St Edmund House
 Ipswich
 Suffolk
 IP4 1LZ
 01473 234741
 info@ucs.ac.uk
 www.ucs.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design (BA Hons) Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Undergraduate Admissions
 Sussex House
 University of Sussex
 Brighton
 BN1 9RH
 01273 678416
 ug.admissions@sussex.ac.uk
 www.sussex.ac.uk

- Games and Multimedia Environments (BSc Hons) Three years full-time

SWANSEA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Mount Pleasant Campus
 Swansea
 SA1 6ED
 01792 481000
 dale.dewitt@swhe.ac.uk
 www.smu.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BSc Hons) Three years full-time
- Creative Computer Games Design (BA Hons) Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF TEESIDE

Middlesbrough
 TS1 3BA
 01642 218121
 registry@tees.ac.uk
 www.tees.ac.uk

- Computer Animation and Games Design (HND) Two years full-time
- Computer Games (BA/BSc Hons) Three years full-time/four years sandwich
- Digital Music and Computer Games Design (BA Hons) Three years full-time/four years sandwich



UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Cromore Road
 Coleraine
 Co. Londonderry
 Northern Ireland
 BT52 1SA
 +44 (0)28 70324366
 computing@ulster.ac.uk
 www.compeng.ulster.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BEng Hons) Four years sandwich
- Computing (Game Development) with DIS (BSc Hons) Four years sandwich

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF SCOTLAND

Paisley
 Renfrewshire
 Scotland
 PA1 2BE
 0800 027 1000
 uni-direct@uws.ac.uk
 www.uws.ac.uk

- Computer Games Development (BSc/BSc Hons) Three years full-time/five years sandwich
- Computer Games Technology (BSc/BSc Hons) Three to four years full-time/five years sandwich
- Computing with Games Production (BSc/BSc Hons) Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

65 Davies Street
 London
 W1K 5DA
 020 7514 6000x6197
 c.anderson@arts.ac.uk
 www.arts.ac.uk

- Interactive Games Design (Fdg FdA/Hon BA) One to two years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

35 Marylebone Road
 London
 W1U 5LS
 020 7911 5000
 admissions@westminster.ac.uk
 www.westminster.ac.uk

- Computer Games (Hon BSc) Three years full-time

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

Admissions Unit
 MX207
 Camp Street
 Wolverhampton
 West Midlands
 WV1 1AD
 01902 321000
 enquiries@wlv.ac.uk
 www.wlv.ac.uk

- Computer Games Design (Hon BA) Three years full-time
- Computer Science (Games Development) (Hon BSc) Four years sandwich

FURTHER EDUCATION

QANTM COURSES 2009

Worldwide options available from the game dev specialist

AMSTERDAM

Qantm College
Johan van Hasseltweg 31
Amsterdam
1021
The Netherlands
+31 (0)20 4 350 650
info@qantm.nl
www.qantm.nl

LONDON

Qantm College
2-12 Pentonville Road
London
N1 9HF
England
+44 (0)845 017 1015
info@qantm.co.uk
www.qantm.co.uk

QANTM COURSES:

- Diploma of Game Design and Development (one year)
- BSc (Hons) Games Programming (two years accelerated)
- Diploma of 3D Animation (one year)
- BA (Hons) Interactive Animation (two years accelerated)
- Diploma of Graphic Design (one year)
- Diploma of Web Design and Development (one year)
- BA (Hons) Multimedia Arts (two years accelerated)
- MA Creative Media Practise (one year top-up for BA/BSc)
- Diploma of Game Audio Production (one year)

ZURICH

Qantm College
Buckhauserstrasse 24
Zurich
8048
Switzerland
+41 (0)44 200 12 08
zuerich@qantm.ch
www.qantm.ch

BERLIN

Qantm College
Sortauer Strasse 18-22
Berlin
13509
Germany
+49 (0)30 4986 0054
t.brueggemann@qantm.de
www.qantm.de

MUNICH

Qantm College
Hoferstraße 3
Munich
81737
Germany
+49 (0)89 68 771
info@qantm.de
www.qantm.de

SINGAPORE

Qantm College
71 Bencoolen Street #02-01
Singapore
189 643
Singapore
+65 (0)6491 1188
www.saesingapore.com/
course_details/details
qantm.htm

BRISBANE

Qantm College
Level 13, Qantm House
Brisbane
4000
Australia
+61 (0)7 3017 4333
enquiries@qantmcollege
edu.au
www.qantmcollege.edu.au

VIENNA

Qantm College
Linke Wienzeile 130a
Vienna
1060
Austria
+49 (0)1 961 0303
info@qantm.at
www.qantm.at

MELBOURNE

Qantm College
11 Jeffcott St
Melbourne
3003
Australia
+61 (0)3 9329 5790
enquiries@qantmcollege
edu.au
www.qantmcollege.edu.au

VIDEOGAME CULTURE

EDGE

NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | HANDHELD | COIN-OP | ONLINE



32% of the readers of **Edge** are between the ages of 18 and 24

Each month, **Edge** publishes a dedicated University Profile

Edge also produces an annual Get Into Games section, focusing on further education and careers in the videogame industry

To advertise in **Edge**
or **Edge Online**,
contact Julian House:
jhouse@futurenet.co.uk

"Advertising with **Edge** has worked wonders for us – we're getting many clicks, and all the students who attended our last open evening said they came to us after seeing the ad in **Edge**. In fact, our University Profile is what worked best"

Guradys Shone (née Morin),
marketing and communications manager,
School of Informatics, City University, London

REGION SPECIFIC: YORKSHIRE, UK

The global expansion of the videogame industry may have placed the focus elsewhere, but at one time Yorkshire was one of the UK's biggest areas in terms of production, boasting some of the best game coding talent in the world. With the likes of Artic Software, Gremlin Graphics and Realtime Games bringing new ideas to the market, it was a buoyant place to be during the '80s.

Times change, of course, but it would be wrong to think that the early talent simply bled away to development clusters around Brighton, Guildford and London. Take Gremlin as an example: many of the staff who worked at the Sheffield-based codeshop on much-beloved games like *Lotus Esprit*, *Turbo Challenge* and the *Monty Mole* and *Premier Manager* series now ply their trades at Sumo Digital.

If one thing came out of the interviews we've conducted with Yorkshire studios it was a conviction that the area is a great place to work, and a great place to remain. Indeed, many of the region's oldest independent developers still survive today, having avoided the management buyouts, deleterious console cycles and mass redundancies that have afflicted many other parts of the UK over the last decade.

Why the perception that Yorkshire languishes behind other regions? Partly because its developers get their heads down and work on both original IP and globally recognised franchises without making an elaborate song and dance about it. Its ability to determinedly make things happen is one of its biggest strengths.



156 MAKING VIDEOGAMES IN YORKSHIRE: AN OVERVIEW



160 AN AUDIENCE WITH YORKSHIRE'S FINEST



168 STUDIO PROFILE: SUMO DIGITAL



172 STUDIO PROFILE: CANALSIDE STUDIOS



175 STUDIO PROFILE: CHEMISTRY



176 STUDIO PROFILE: TEAM 17



177 STUDIO PROFILE: THE CODE MONKEYS



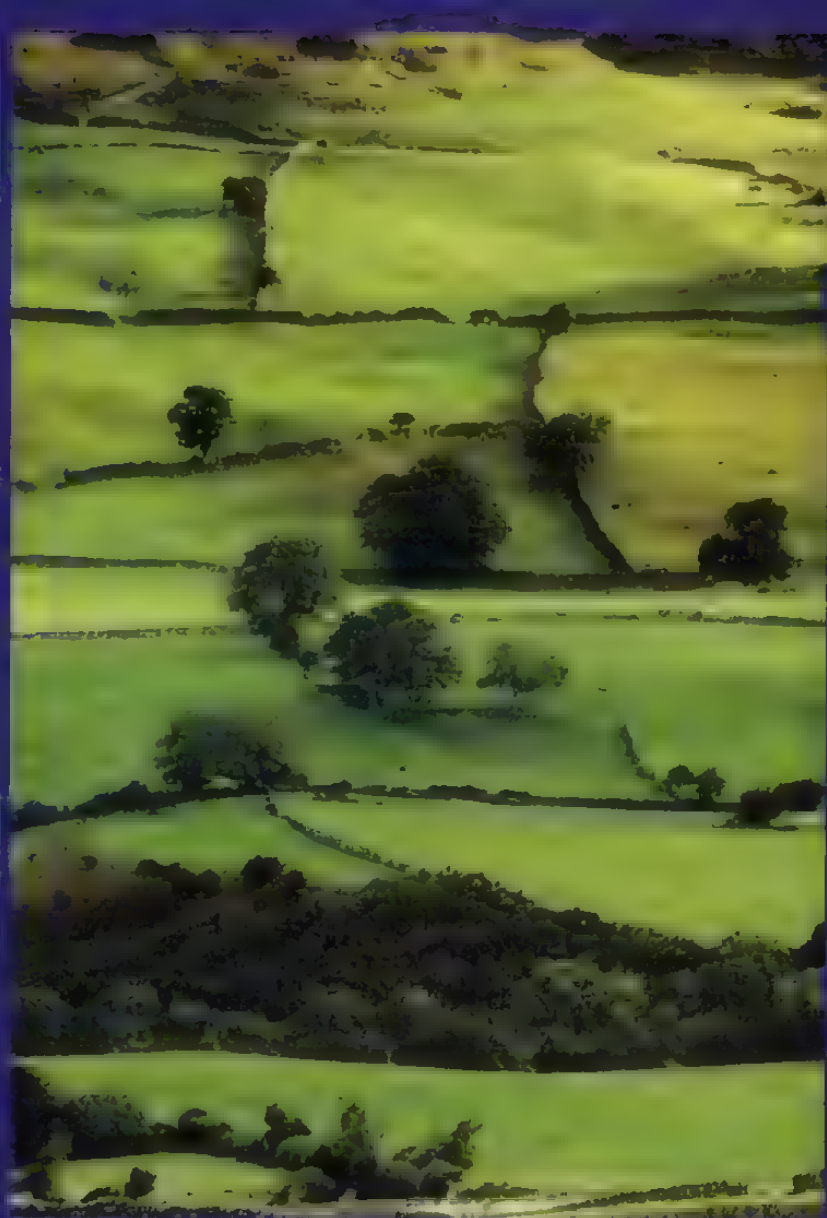
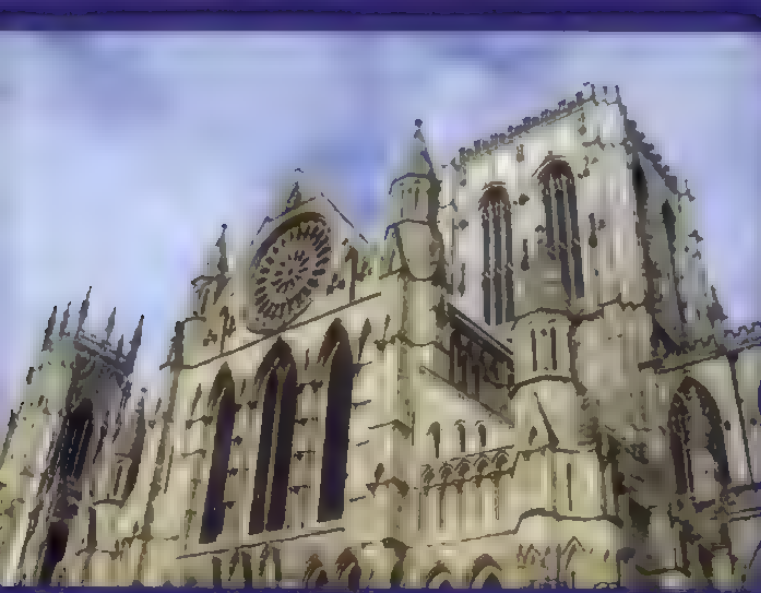
179 STUDIO PROFILE: REVOLUTION SOFTWARE



181 STUDIO PROFILE: DISTINCTIVE DEVELOPMENTS



182 STUDIO PROFILE: CREATIVE NORTH



ALL CREATIVES GREAT AND SMALL

It may not have the reputation of Silicon Valley, but among the hillsides and doles of Yorkshire lie developers with some serious global clout

Yorkshire as the land of whippets and flat caps is a cliché that endures, but it is a region that has never taken much notice of snobbery. The truth is that Yorkshire folk simply tend to get on with things and let others snipe from the sidelines. Hard graft and grit built many of the industries that made the region a powerhouse – not just in the UK but in the world – first with the wool industry in the 16th century then in coal, textiles and steel during the Industrial Revolution.

Clearly the region has experienced turbulence in more recent times, largely when those same industries went into decline in the latter half of the

20th century. But while many of the chimney stacks and sprawling Victorian factories and mills still mark the skyline in the county's towns and cities, it's clear

It's hardly surprising that Yorkshire is home to four of the world's top-100-performing game developers: Rockstar Leeds, Team 17, Sumo Digital and Chemistry

that the region as a whole has experienced a renaissance during the last decade.

Regeneration work in Leeds, Sheffield, Hull, Bradford and various towns across Yorkshire make it one of the most vibrant and invested-in areas in the

UK. Sheffield's GVA (gross value added) recently boasted a 60 per cent increase, while Leeds' skyline has been transformed by grandiose corporate offices,

with some 16 further skyscrapers planned over the next few years. Bradford and Hull's transformation has been no less remarkable: the former closely vying out to Liverpool as the European Capital of Culture 2008, the latter boasting a £300m Quay West leisure



facilities development, due for completion in 2013.

After some lean times, money is flooding into the area. It's no coincidence that the first Harvey Nichols store to open outside London can be found in the Victoria Quarter of Leeds. "It's a most unrecognisable driving around because it has come on so much," agrees **Craig Albeck** of Creative North. "When you get the train in from Leeds you notice there's been so much development work. We are multicultural and we can cater for people from all walks of life."

So it's hardly surprising that Yorkshire is a ready-made home for some of the world's top 100 performing videogame companies. Rockstar Leeds (team 7

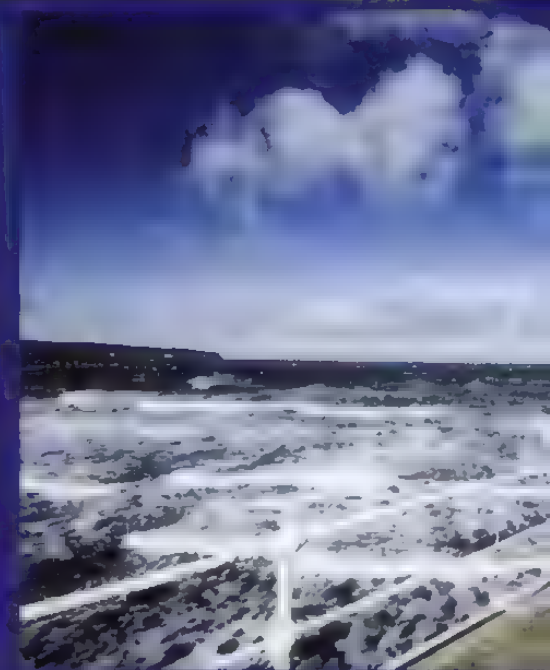
Sumo Digital and Kojin Chemistry studio Creative Assembly, they have contributed approximately £28 million to the UK economy with a combined workforce in the region of 300 personnel. Put in context, Yorkshire has nearly ten per cent of the UK's game development workforce.

There's a massive sense of optimism in the area, largely a result of small teams such as Creative North quickly establishing themselves in the area and helping to foster new talent into the industry. The bigger companies, for such as Sumo Digital, are having to turn down work and though nothing is

ever explicitly said, there's a feeling that it's the local companies that benefit from all the extra work.

One organisation that facilitates inter-developer relations and has been instrumental in bringing work to the area is Game Republic, an independent trade alliance that supports, encourages and promotes game development in the area. GameHorizon may be doing great things in the north east, but it was largely modelled on Game Republic's sterling achievements.

But more exciting things are in the pipeline from this industrious organisation. It recently integrated with Screen Yorkshire and launched the ambitious Game Republic Academy, the UK's first videogame



academy which runs at Bradford, Hull and Sheffield Hallam University. For those wishing to break into game development, this is a vibrant region.

The Game Republic Academy scheme has already attracted £120,000 worth of investment and provides sponsorship opportunities for budding creatives across the globe. The concept sees students getting to study for a masters in game development and also getting summer placements at companies such as Rockstar, Team 17 and Sumo Digital.

Equally impressive are Huddersfield University's BA in Computer Games Design and BSc in

Computer Games Programming. The degree courses have been so successful that the university's School of Computing and Engineering has opened its own commercial development, Cambridge Studios, and is about to release its first Microsoft-approved Xbox title *Yo Ho Kablammo*. Though game courses continue to proliferate in the UK, Yorkshire's finest are among those feeding talent into local industry who are capable of hitting the ground running.

Centrally positioned in the region, both Leeds and Sheffield offer strong transport links to all areas of the UK, with Leeds Bradford airport providing international travel. It's a different pace of life here,

too – enthuses **Mike Cox**, studio head at Chemistry.

When I was managing a London studio I was knackered minute one after a driving because 'I'd just fought round the M25, then on to the tube. By the time I got to work I was already stressed. But here, nine times out of ten I've got a lovely little drive from the peak district into Sheffield."

And the local landscape deserves its reputation from the North Yorkshire moors which inspired *Wuthering Heights* to the stunning limestone country of the Dales. Yorkshire's a ramber or rock climber's playground. The coastline, meanwhile, offers up the likes of Scarborough, Frey and Whitby



it's no coincidence that so many BBC dramas, documentaries and movies have been shot in the area. From *All Creatures Great And Small* to

Of particular note to film and videogame followers is Bradford's long-established National Media Museum, which has plans to curate a videogame section

Heartbeat. Yorkshire offers views that bring in an estimated £4.2bn in tourism every year.

Some of the UK's most visited and prestigious attractions are also to be found in Yorkshire. York's York Viking Centre and Leeds Royal Armouries

Museum have picked up awards aplenty, while Salt's Mill in Saltaire, just outside Bradford, is now a UNESCO world heritage centre, and also home to the

captivating David Hockney Photographic Museum. Of particular note to film and videogame followers, meanwhile, is Bradford's long-established National Media Museum, which has plans to curate and open a videogame section in the near future.

In more practical terms, a significant boon for anyone looking to relocate to the area is its housing affordability, with the average semi-detached Yorkshire dwelling clocking in at £154,000.

Though Yorkshire natives are not traditionally renowned for blowing their trumpets, there's certainly a lot to be proud of in the area. The rich tradition of game development in the region was founded on the same hard work and determination which characterised its earlier industrial drives and, now that Yorkshire appears more willing to shout about itself, we'll be sure to hear a lot more about its achievements in the future.

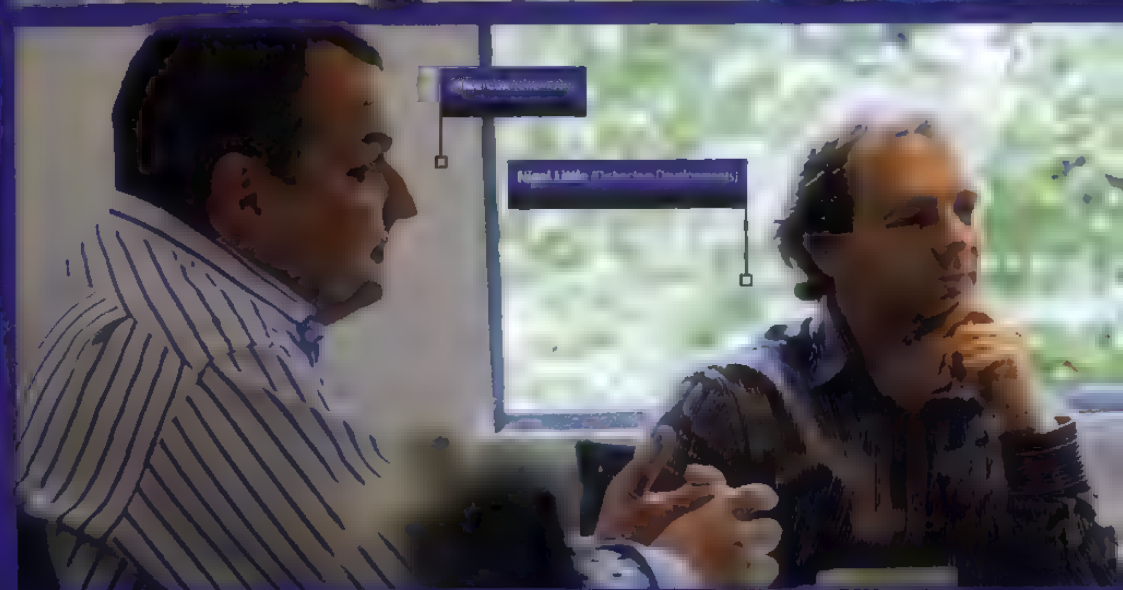
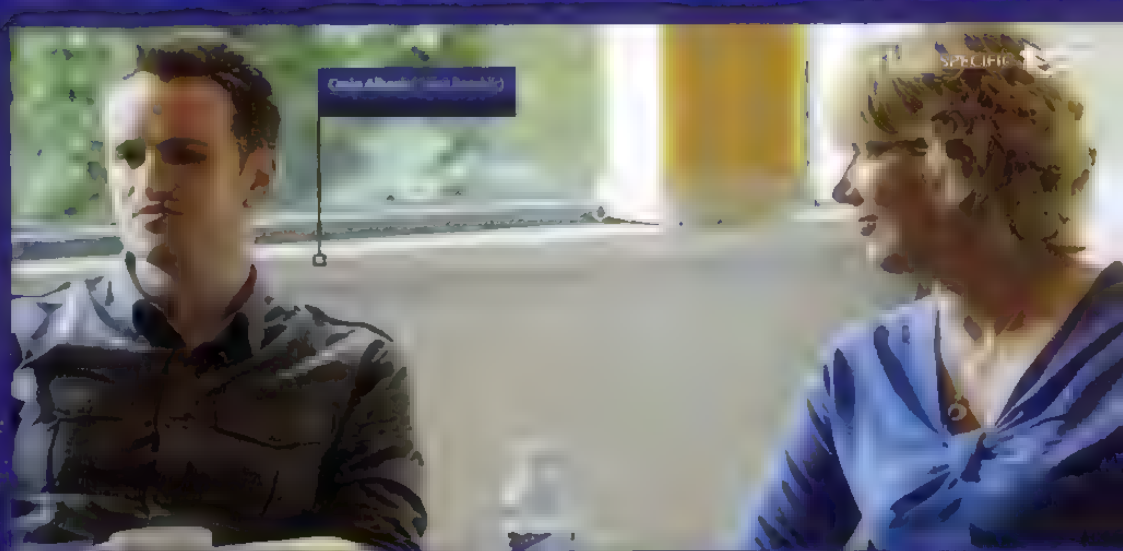




NORTHERN

Yorkshire hasn't traditionally been considered a development hotbed, but that perception is changing. We get together with some of its key players to find out how

We are sitting in Sumo Digital's HQ to meet with some of Yorkshire's most successful names in game development. This shiny facility contrasts sharply with the cosy images that talk of the region brings to mind, so it is an appropriate venue for a discussion centred on the opportunities that exist in the fast-moving digital landscape. Joining us are Game Republic's **Craig Albeck**, **Paul Porter** (studio head, Sumo Digital), **Nigel Little** (MD, Distinctive Developments), **Mike Cox** (studio head, Chemistry), **Phil Mundy** (MD, Creative North), **Ruth Taylor** (lecturer, Huddersfield University), and **Darren Mills** (creative director, Sumo)



EXPOSURE

What particular strengths does Yorkshire have in terms of game development?

Craig Albeck: We have in Yorkshire four of the world's best 100 companies. We are sat in one now [Sumo Digital]. Massive franchises – *Grand Theft Auto*, *Sega Superstar Tennis*. There are people specialising in the Unreal Engine, mobile studios doing cutting edge things. Top universities as well. The first academy for games was set up in this region. That's a pretty good start.

Paul Porter: I think one of the main benefits is that it's very central. It has a lot of large population areas. We're between Leeds, Manchester, Hull, Derby and Nottingham

bang in the middle. We're based in south Yorkshire but there are a lot of areas in Yorkshire with a lot of people and a lot of universities breeding that talent.

Nigel Little: It's also the history of the area, as well. We had Gremlin Graphics based in Sheffield. I remember going into their shop when I was buying Spectrum games and that kicked it all off. A lot of people will tell you that there's been that history in the area for a long, long time in Sheffield and Yorkshire and the wider area.

What's your take on what Yorkshire offers outside of the world of game development?

Nigel Little: The central position within the country is very helpful. There are some great universities in the area that attract a high calibre of student, and they very often want to settle down here and stay.

Mike Cox: The cost of living, as well. I come from London and recruiting around the Guildford area can be an absolute nightmare. One, because it's very cut-throat, mainly because there are a lot of developers around there all vying for the same talent. And two, the cost of living. Graduates just can't afford to live around Guildford, it's just too expensive. At least we have a chance here.



Phil Mundy: I think you're right. Especially running a development studio in the UK, it's easier, by there's more and more competition from offshore developers. Basing something in Guildford is prohibitively pricey. One thing we've noticed in our relatively short three years as a developer in the region is a real sense of community around here. It's not necessarily competition as collaboration a lot of the time. I think it's a supportive and dynamic region to be a part of.

How does the support network work?

Craig Albeck: I'll put my Game Republic hat on for a second. The very fact we brought everyone together on a regular basis – the networking power – people

"There's more and more competition from offshore developers. And basing something in Guildford is prohibitively pricey"

got business out of that. People take great pride in sharing information or swapping war stories. Game Republic will keep going mainly because people will come together and get recommendations and referrals. I know one game where someone said, "We can't do that SKU because we're maxed out – we'll push the work out to someone else." I know it goes on, and the work is passed around. I don't want to stir up a north-south divide, but we seem to be more content talking back and forth about work here. It's more closed in other parts of the UK.

Ruth Taylor: Yes, I think in terms of the universities in the region we've had a lot of support from regional game companies and we're keen to develop talent and see it working across the region. And perhaps that's a little different in other education establishments. We are very much a bang in the middle, and we've always had that history of supporting industry. We came from that background in engineering and trades, and this is why placements on sandwich courses and working with industry is tremendously important for us.

Paul Porter: Game Republic is a great way to get universities together, with the development studios and other pools of creative talent that are local. So you get people that do audio, people that do post production, people that do all sorts of things. So it's all people that are local that come under the Game Republic umbrella and it's a lot easier and more efficient to work that way.

Darren Mills: We've definitely benefited from working with universities and other developers as a result of being a part of Game Republic.

Craig Albeck: Can you mention *Super Rub A Dub*?

Paul Porter: Yeah!

Darren Mills: *Super Rub A Dub* was a collaboration with us and Sheffield University. They developed a flow system and they didn't know what to do with it. They approached us via Game Republic and we helped them out with game design and took it to that next stage, then took it to publishers. And helped complete the process.

Does Game Republic help in terms of staff and recruitment issues?

Nigel Little: Myself and Phil worked together on a project and when we ran out of capacity we got Phil in to help out to get that project out of the door. That was a major help. We've known Phil for a while and we knew his work was good. And he's local so if he did it wrong we knew where to go [laughs].

Craig Albeck: Two examples of students – can remember one works for you guys. Sumo – was on a radio show, and said he was a role model for people because the guy was studying a non-game-related subject but he was passionate about games. He worked out himself. He set up a society and all these people got involved with it. They got so far down the line developing a prototype that never went anywhere, but that's not the point. He applied



himself came to every event we ran, he was always on my case, and look where he's ended up. Another one is a guy that got himself a placement at Rockstar Leeds. He's a student that kept coming to our events and was nagging me. And Gordon Hall, president of Rockstar Leeds, said, "OK, I'll go and speak to him." And he's started working there. And I think that's a tribute to us northerners – that we make this stuff work.

Do you think the cost of living here will attract talent to the extent that game development in the region will expand over the next few years?

Craig Albeck: There's a great lifestyle to it. Let's not overlook that. We're based in Huddersfield, but live in Leeds. A lot of people live around these areas. What would you rather do – would you rather spend 20 minutes on the train and keep in the countryside if you're the outdoors type, or spend 20 minutes on the Tube in the city? We've already mentioned the standard of living, which is excellent. The nightlife is very good. Sheffield is a good place to go out, so is Leeds. We're also not far from Manchester – if you're in Huddersfield, you have a direct line to Manchester. There's lots to do.

Darren Mills: We cater for all tastes. You can live 15 miles outside the city and be out in the countryside by yourself in the middle of nowhere. Or be in the city centre in a flat and be five minutes from the office. It's whatever you want.

Is good accommodation for younger employees easily available?

Paul Porter: Absolutely. We have people paired up but people are not crammed in.

Darren Mills: The other thing is, this is not a young industry any more. We've got people with two or three kids, families and wives. Yes, there are people that come straight out of university. They are single and want to bunk up with mates and want to go out drinking every Friday night. But there's also the family side to it that Sheffield and the whole area can accommodate. More and more we're interviewing people and when the subject of moving comes up it's well known that this area can cater for that. We have good schools in the area.

Mike Cox: I relocated November last year from High Wycombe and the first thing my wife did was scour the Orsted sites to get the school reports and we were surprised how many genuinely good schools there were around the Sheffield area.

Ruth Taylor: But why not Yorkshire? You say "Why Yorkshire?" but why not here? There's talent here, there's great facilities here. Why should anyone be surprised? Admittedly, it rains.

Mike Cox: It's not Manchester!

Ruth Taylor: No [laughs]. It's not a bad part of the country to live in. If it's just an accident of fate that there's a lot going on here in terms of creative industries at the moment then that's something everyone needs to build on.

Craig Albeck: Sheffield's got that, definitely. It's a hub, isn't it? Increasingly we're going to do this as a company – bring in people from outside the industry because they've got a different skill set. They are even using the same software packages as us, so why can we not bring these people in? They have a different insight into doing things. It's happening in Sheffield, and Huddersfield is good for that, and so is Leeds.

Have you found it difficult to attract talent from outside of the UK?

Mike Cox: They don't think anything other than London exists in the UK. It can be quite tricky. We've done a lot of foreign recruitment and getting them to even understand where Sheffield is. They've no idea, really. They base their thoughts on London.

Paul Porter: Absolutely.

Mike Cox: So there's a mental bridge to get over. They assume that there can't be anything kicking off in Sheffield on a Friday night. They think that's only in London. It's fantastic when they come and see what Sheffield can be like.

Paul Porter: They ask which airport they should fly to – Heathrow or Gatwick?

Mike Cox: That's right. They ask, "How far from London are you?"

Do you really believe that there's a sense of snobbery in the south of the UK?

Mike Cox: We are having some difficulty recruiting



some more experienced people into Sheffield at the moment. I've had some people who on paper we would have interviewed but as soon as they discovered we were in Sheffield they declined. Because we advertise as Kuju, they sometimes don't realise, then when we say we're in Sheffield they have declined. But that's relatively rare.

Do you find that publishers are at all concerned about where you're based?

Mike Cox: They just don't care. I've never had a publisher say they don't want to work with us because we're based in Sheffield.

Craig Albeck: One formula we came up with for Game Republic was to say to publishers, "Right, it's expensive for us all to fly to you so we'll fly you in to see us, and we'll look after you, and you can spend some quiet time with people, and they'll pitch you ideas." It was great. We had guys coming from France, the USA, etc. It was fantastic. Even better they could drink us under the table. A lot of developers got some good stuff out of that.

Do you think Yorkshire is in strong health?

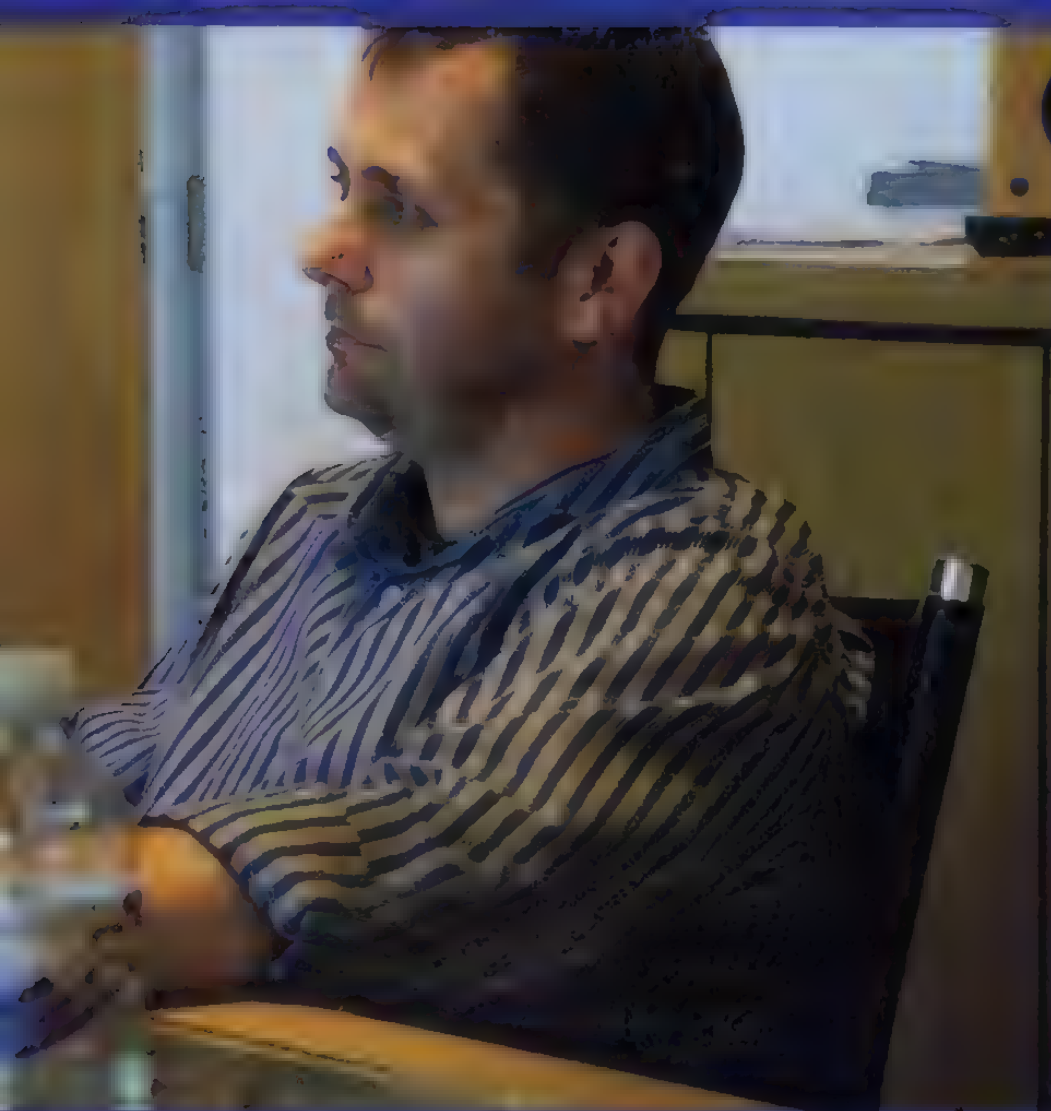
Darren Mills: Yes, but one worrying thing – and this

is not just a Yorkshire thing – with the current climate with mortgages and housing, it's that we've had a couple of people who've got as far as accepting a position and looking into moving into the area and trying to sell their house in the region they're in and having problems. And they've had to decline because they've had problems. But I don't think that's a Yorkshire thing, that's going to be a problem over the next couple of years that will develop across the country. It's nothing to do with the employers, it's just the housing market and external factors.

Mike Cox: But then Sheffield has really good transport links. I've got people who are considering working for me and considering commuting 80 miles. But because the train line is nice and quick they are quite happy to do that. They don't really have the opportunity to move at the moment.

Darren Mills: Exactly. We have people that commute from Nottingham, Leeds, Manchester and Hull.

Craig Albeck: All those logistical factors are good. I get to work in 20 minutes from Leeds to Huddersfield. You can then go and visit clients in Manchester very quickly in the car. You can be in London in two hours from here. We have these big companies around us, therefore if it doesn't work out



"I think most game courses in the area have adapted well because we've been having discussions with units for four or five years"

at one place, you don't have to go back to where you came from. You can enquire somewhere else. So, to answer your original question, yes, it will grow, and the opportunities will grow in this region. In terms of masters degree training we have three of the best. Ruth will tell you about all the work Huddersfield Uni. is doing. Hull offers a really solid games programming course. The guys here at Sumo will vouch for that – guys work here that came off that course. Bradford has excellent AI and arts departments, and we've got Sheffield Hallam on our doorstep. We've combined all that and come up with the Game Republic academy, which is essentially six months in a classroom and four or five months on a placement. We were subsidising all of that because we appreciate that if you want to get into this industry you've got to educate yourself and then some. It can cost you £3,500 to get yourself on a course. We said we'd subsidise and make that just easier and get you a placement, and then it's up to you to work hard on that placement. Feasibly, you can get a job out of that but you've got to pull your finger out.

Ruth Taylor: One of the reasons we weren't involved in the academy was that we don't have a masters in

games. We have undergraduate programmes, but we haven't a masters course for a number of reasons. One concern is that students who go on to masters courses typically couldn't get a job, then think the next thing to do is a masters course. That's not useful to them because what you need before a masters course is experience. We have invested a lot of time in adapting to the advice and the criticism – cruel criticism, sometimes – from the industry. We didn't know that much about the industry, and I had to learn. We've got a lot of expertise in computer science and digital media, but to do it just re you have to have a completely different approach to teaching games, much akin to teaching traditional engineering courses which have a core of academic content but very practical nuts and bolts – how does something work, and how do you deliver a finished product.

Do you think the courses in this area are geared enough towards producing graduates that understand the requirements of development on a day-to-day basis?

Ruth Taylor: We are trying to evolve how we teach. It's difficult for universities to change quickly and it is challenging for us as we constantly have to deliver things in a different way year on year. We need input from people who are doing it day on day. We wouldn't be producing the right sort of graduates if they weren't seeing the process up front. It's a very attractive, glamorous industry from the outside, but it's really hard work. But 18- or 19-year-olds don't often understand that.

Paul Porter: I think most courses in this area have been adapted very well because we have been having discussions with universities for the last four or five years. So I'm really pleased with the courses we have locally. But that's really the technical side and the programming side. I think there's still a lot to be done on the creative side and the production side.

Craig Albeck: There was a big push recently to go into schools and universities early on in their studies and say – look, actually it's great you have enthusiasm in games, but it ain't going to be easy.

I don't know what the obsession is with game design. I can see the celebrity status you can get from it but there are all these other roles. This is how the supply chain works, but they are tied in with hard work. We've got to address that perception. We also need to promote the agenda that games are not all violent. Some university students come out and say, "Right let's get started on *Halo 57*," but it's not like that.

Can start-up developers get help and financial aid locally?

Paul Porter: We had quite a lot of help from Business Link South Yorkshire when we started Sumo. We had some help, certainly.

Craig Albeck: I think, regionally, it's good. We can try to shape some of these schemes around people's needs. But I think some of these people in Whitehall, they just set policy and try to group us in with other sectors. And it doesn't work like that. We're a completely different industry. The Games Up campaign is doing its best to do that, and we'll get

"I don't know what the obsession is with game design. I can see the celebrity status, but there are all these other roles."

there. Everyone is lobbying for tax breaks but it's all going towards films. But I'm not going to open up that can of worms!

In terms of government funding, do you receive anything for university courses?

Ruth Taylor: No, nothing at all. It's things like dev kits we need. And we've considered looking at other platforms. But it's also the level of security we need to have – people coming and going. It's much more difficult with students. So it's problematic to provide some of the facilities that would be useful.

Phil Mundy: That's right. At Huddersfield University they do have for all intents and purposes a commercial studio there. You have publishing deals in place, you are sending out content-complete. We've had a number of placement students through our doors who've said, "Thank you so much – I've learnt so much over the last month than I did in the last year and a half." That studio would be a perfect finishing ground for masters students. You learn so much from that environment. That's what makes people ready.

Ruth Taylor: The advantage we have with the studio is that we can discipline them, we can manage them.



like they're in the workplace. If there are discipline issues, or they're not producing the work, we can fire them. But if someone is paying for a course on a MSc you can't really fire them, can you?

Nigel Little: The thing we always ask ourselves is, should we take people from games courses or from a more academic course? I think it's starting to swing in the direction of games courses. But traditionally we've found that a lot of people on the games courses have a wide spectrum of skills. You get one person who is really good but also one person who's drifted into it and doesn't care that much.

Darren Mills: I've interviewed a lot of people coming off game art courses and one thing I've found is that what these people are taught is very broad, without a focus on anything. Even on the final project their focus isn't on a specific thing. They come to us as a junior animator because they've done an animation project. That to me always rings alarm bells. I'm always thinking, I can take this person on and they'll stay with us for a year, and they'll go to the highest bidder. Or I can see this person in a year when he's looking for the highest bidder and take him then. They come out of university with very high expectations of salary.



Ruth Taylor: That's why it's important for us to have the studio experience in the middle. I've had three ads doing textures all year and they've all got very good at it now.

Mike Cox: But not one of them wants to be a texture artist [laughs].

Ruth Taylor: Well, that's not true, actually. It's that experience of sticking at something and understanding why it's important to have a task and fail, which is such an important part of the learning process. "You made a beautiful texture, but it's far too big - I want the same effect, but make it tiny." That's why it's important for us to have people from industry to come in and visit. I'm a tutor and I tell them, but it doesn't have the same weight.

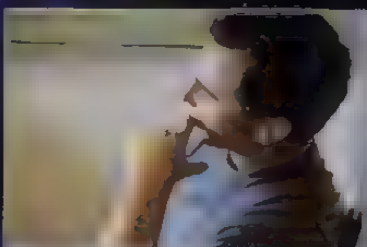
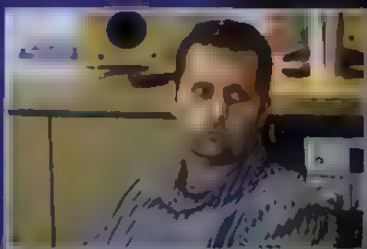
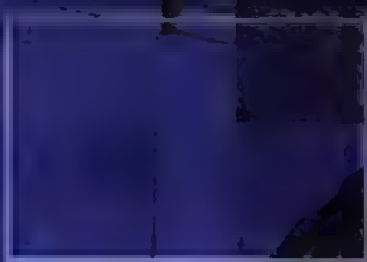
Mike Cox: There are no positions for generalists on our teams. They are all specialist positions.

Darren Mills: Yes, if we were employing generalists then we'd employ extremely experienced generalists.

What do you think are the key issues facing the region? Are they the same as in other areas?

Mike Cox: Recruitment.

Darren Mills: Absolutely.



Mike Cox: At the moment we have less a problem with junior roles and more of a problem with senior ones. That's where we are now.

How can you go about addressing that?

Mike Cox: That's why I'm happy to be involved with this today. Awareness of the area, awareness of the values of working in this area.

Paul Porter: The industry is growing and there's only so much talent feeding in at the lower level. It's such a fast-paced industry, too. It's always growing - new technology, new hardware, new techniques. Teams are continuing to get bigger.

Craig Albeck: People are willing to come back, too. There were quite a few legends when I was working at Game Republic who actually wanted to come back here and either freelance or come back home. We've got something here in Yorkshire. Birds migrate and eventually come back home.

Is that tied into the change that's taking place?

Paul Porter: Sheffield's a very up-and-coming city. It's been undergoing regeneration for the last ten years. If you were out on the train today you would see the remodeling of the city centre. That's continuing; they're doing the Crucible this year. There's great nightlife in Sheffield, there's Sheffield for shows, there's Meadow Hall for shopping, there's Derbyshire five miles the other side of the city, and the Peak District - there's something for everybody.

Craig Albeck: It's almost unrecognisable driving around this area because it has come on so much. It's the same in Leeds when you get the train into the city because there's so much development work. I've got no aspirations in London. We are multicultural and we can cater for people from all walks of life.

What about the old claim that it's friendlier in this part of the world?

Craig Albeck: Certainly. There is a north-south divide, definitely. The Sheffield people are friendlier and more accommodating than southerners. And I speak as a southerner!

Ruth Taylor: Huddersfield is really quite small compared to Leeds and Sheffield. But you have access to all that big city stuff with access to Leeds and Manchester. And then, if you can pedal, you can get out to the countryside very easily.

Craig Albeck: We have ten per cent of the UK's workforce and three per cent of the UK's games come out of Yorkshire. "Think Games, Think Yorkshire" was the mantra we used to use. It used to ring true with the American publishers anyway.





SUMO DIGITAL

Once Gremlin Graphics, then Infogrames Sheffield, Sumo is a Yorkshire developer with a fine heritage

NAME: Sumo Digital
LOCATION: Sheffield
DATE FOUNDED: 2003
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:
 UK: 125; India: 30
URL:
www.sumo-digital.com
SELECTED SOFTOGRAPHY:
OutRun 2, OutRun 2006, Coast To Coast, TOCA Race Driver 2, Virtua Tennis World Tour, Sega Superstars Tennis

Since opening its doors in 2003, Sumo Digital has quietly but assuredly become one of the UK's most prolific and respected developers. Formed from the ashes of Infogrames Sheffield, the team now numbers over 125 employees, with a further 30 in its outsourcing operation in Pune, India.

Though accomplished in practically every genre, it was the company's work on Sega's *OutRun 2* in 2004 that garnered it global recognition, giving it a platform to work on high-profile franchises for the likes of Codemasters, Sony, THQ, Sega and Ubisoft. It's strange, now, to think that until the release of *OutRun 2* Sumo was unknown to gamers, having previously focused on health and fitness software.

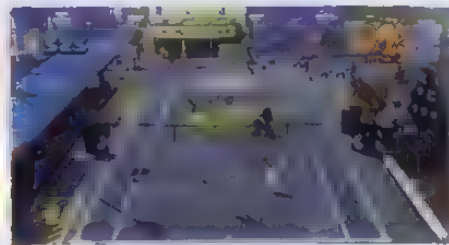
From the outside looking in, Sumo exudes a cool, efficient exterior, its management team marking out professionalism, project management and the ability to maintain high team morale as the foundations for its prolific output. That's to undersell the sort of creativity evident in its games, however. From updates of the *TOCA* series to Xbox 360 and PSP ports of *Virtua Tennis 3*, the company has a diverse back catalogue, delivered on time and on budget.

But more recently Sumo has been exploring new IP with the PSN downloadable game *Super Rub A*

Dub and Sega Superstars Tennis. The latter has won over many Sega fans, old and new, with its vibrant art style and delivery of a finely honed tennis experience despite its outrageous power shots and off-the-wall characters. *Superstars'* mini-games which include tennis variations of *Virtua Cop*, *OutRun*, *Samba De Amigo* and *House Of The Dead*, are particularly absorbing examples of Sumo's ability to adapt to any style or genre.

In August 2007 Sumo was acquired by Foundation 9 Entertainment, which also owns Amaze Entertainment, Backbone Entertainment, The Collective, Digital Eclipse, ImaginEngine, Pipeworks, and Shiny Entertainment, but the company remains independent and responsible for its own output.

Less than 18 months ago we visited the studio prior to its move to its new location next to the Meadow Hall shopping centre in Leeds and were told that the company was about to establish a DS team responsible for new technology and output. In the time since, Sumo has produced several titles for Nintendo's handheld, and is now one of the UK's most sought-after companies for producing work on the popular portable – a fine illustration of the developer's dedication to its goals.



Sega trusted Sumo enough to hand over to the studio a galaxy of its iconic characters for *Superstars Tennis*. It was pleased with the results.





It was Sumo's brilliant work on Xbox game *OutRun 2* (above) and *OutRun 2006: Coast To Coast* on PS2 that cemented the developer's credentials in the eyes of veteran Sega fans



Interview: Paul Porter

What do you feel are Sumo's core strengths nowadays?

Our core strength is quite simply our staff. Many of the staff worked together back at Gremlin and Infogrames Sheffield, and Sega and Sumo were always a good fit. This allowed us to get a lot of good people through the door. We have a very experienced group of people who have worked together for a long time and genuinely love to play games. We care about the games we make, and hopefully this shows!

What are the advantages of being part of Foundation 9?

It's sometimes difficult to get your foot in doors in America but Foundation 9 certainly helps that. We can also share ideas and tech with all of its partners and developers. Being part of Foundation 9 also gives us stability, access to a wealth of experience and the opportunity to invest in our own IP. It also gives us a strong presence in

America and provides us with some of the larger US-based publishers.

How many projects are you working on right now?

We can't say too much about them, but we have five projects on the go. Four of those are multi-platform. We've reached the stage where we are turning work away and have many IPs in the fire. Our latest is *International Track & Field* on DS. We are continuing to grow, with 125 staff now in Sheffield and around 30 in India. We have always grown organically and don't see this changing.

Why does Sumo focus on existing IP rather than new properties?

I would argue that *Sega Superstars Tennis* is a new IP. We are at a point now where we're trusted with major brands by a number of publishers and are taking those brands in different directions. With *Super Hero A Duet* we dipped our toes in the water, so to

speak, and we'll continue to look for opportunities in the future, but it's difficult to fit this in with the number of requests we get from publishers wanting us to work with them on a given IP.

You're involved with Game Republic's Game Academy – what sort of input are you able to offer in terms of game courses at local universities?

We've worked closely with a number of local universities, including Hull, Sheffield Hallam, Derby and Huddersfield. We take placement students and have some students doing their final-year projects on site. We continue to advise on what skills we'd like to see from graduates. It's testament to the universities in the area that they're open to listening to our requirements, and we therefore have a number of courses that offer excellent foundations for getting into the videogame industry.

Studio head ■



Sumo has strong ties with a number of Japanese publishers and works on some celebrated IP, including *Track & Field* for Konami (DS version, above)





SUMO ARE RECRUITING PROGRAMMERS ARTISTS DESIGNERS GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

Sumo Digital are responsible for a string of recent successes including Sega Superstars Tennis, New International Track and Field, Virtua Tennis 3 and OutRun 2.

We are looking for talented individuals with industry experience to work across all of the current gaming platforms on a variety of new titles.



BROKEN SWORD
THE ANGEL OF DEATH

SUPER
RUBO DUE

sumo
DIGITAL

Foundation 9 Entertainment Studio

All positions offer a competitive package
and a great working environment.

Interested? Let us know all about you!

Send your CV, showreels and demos to:

Laura Schofield
Sumo Digital Ltd
Unit 32, Jessops Riverside
800 Brightside Lane
Sheffield
S9 2RX
UK

Or email us:
careers@sumo-digital.com

www.sumo-digital.com



CANALSIDE STUDIOS

One of the most forward-thinking universities in the UK has a unique approach to fostering new developers

NAME:
Canalside Studios
LOCATION:
Huddersfield
DATE FOUNDED: 2006
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:
URL:
www.canalsidestudios.com
SOFTGRAPHY:
Yo-Ho Kablammo

Many universities offer game-related courses but few can boast its own team, not to mention one that's about to release its first Xbox title. University of Huddersfield began offering a BSc (Hons) in Computer Games Programming in 2003, shortly followed by a BA (Hons) in Computer Game Design in 2005. The two courses now take on approximately 100 students each year.

Canalside Studios grew out of the game courses due to the emphasis placed on building functioning games and prototypes. In short, the studio fosters in students exactly what game developers have been looking for from graduates: the ability to plan, design and see a project through to completion. There's a healthy theoretical element to each module, but it's there to support the practical side of game-making.

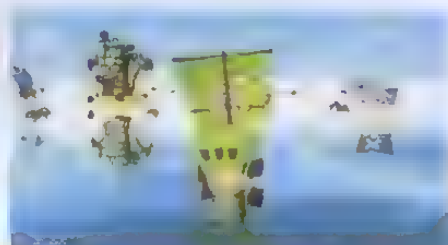
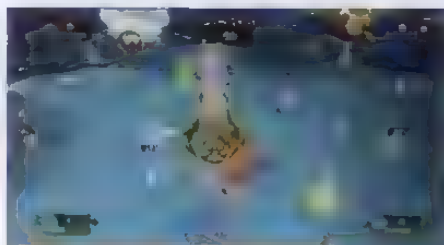
Though it has been established for only two years, the team has already gained first prize at Microsoft's technology competition, The Imagine Cup, and received such widespread praise for its DreamBuildPlay entry that it was developed into a fully fledged game. Hence Yo-Ho Kablammo, a four-player pirate adventure that sees competitors arming mines and broadsiding rivals on the high seas. Even before final approval, the game's notable for its

vibrant art style and Bomberman-level of skull-duggery.

While Huddersfield itself may conjure up images of back-to-back houses and textile mills, it has emerged from its industrial past as one of the most beautiful towns in Yorkshire. Standing near the confluence of the river Colne and the river Holme, Huddersfield University students have no trouble finding views over the West Riding that might serve as some kind of inspiration. And, as its name suggests, Canalside Studios overlooks the Huddersfield Broad Canal and is itself located in an absolutely stunning converted Victorian textile mill within the School of Computing and Engineering. There can be fewer more stimulating and attractive places to study game programming and design.

Students from the university are frequently given placements at studios such as Rare and Sumo Digital while graduates have taken full-time posts with Blizzard, Rebellion and Sega, testament to the studio's ability to encourage creativity alongside hard graft and efficient project management. While Huddersfield University wasn't among the first to offer game-related degrees, it's clear that it has rapidly become a major player and an attractive proposition to both UK and international students.

Yo-Ho Kablammo, which recalls piratical PlayStation game Overboard, started out as an entry for DreamBuildPlay, the Microsoft funded initiative intended to promote XNA as a development environment. It will soon be given commercial life via Xbox Live Arcade.





Interview: Damian De Luca

Subject area leader, digital media, Huddersfield University ■

What was the motivation behind setting up Canalside Studios?

Huddersfield has a strong reputation in delivering sandwich education – it's very important to us to encourage students to seek work placements as part of their study. We believe it equips them better for the workplace when they graduate, and students who go on placement are more likely to get a first class degree. It's often difficult for games students to get a 12-month placement – setting up the studio allowed us to provide this opportunity to a small group of students each year, and it increases our understanding of the development process, which we feed directly back into teaching.

Setting up the studio was a pretty brave venture for us, slightly crazy and certainly outside our normal range of activities, but we were fortunate to get the backing of the university, which invested the capital needed to provide the equipment and space and employ the first placement students.

What's the relationship between the studio and the game courses?

Students who want to work in the studio have to apply for the positions available – right now we can only tend eight placements this way each year, so the competition is pretty stiff. Working in the studio isn't an easy option. Students need to be highly motivated and ambitious self-starters; the selection process isn't solely based on their academic achievement. We don't have time to nanny them – they have to take ownership of the whole development process themselves. Obviously we're there to support and advise them but ultimately the success or failure of the students is down to them. They have to have good creative and technical skills but they also need to be good team players, organised, self-disciplined and entrepreneurial.

What do you think you offer that can't be found elsewhere?

We've brought games development

right into the university, we have first-hand experience. We've taken the mode of development in the studio and are feeding this back into our courses. We'd like to expand upon the current success of the studio model, allowing a greater number of students to experience the entire process of games development, including the last and most difficult 20 per cent – getting the game finished! This kind of work-based learning is a cornerstone in our plans for our undergraduate courses.

What about Yorkshire itself?

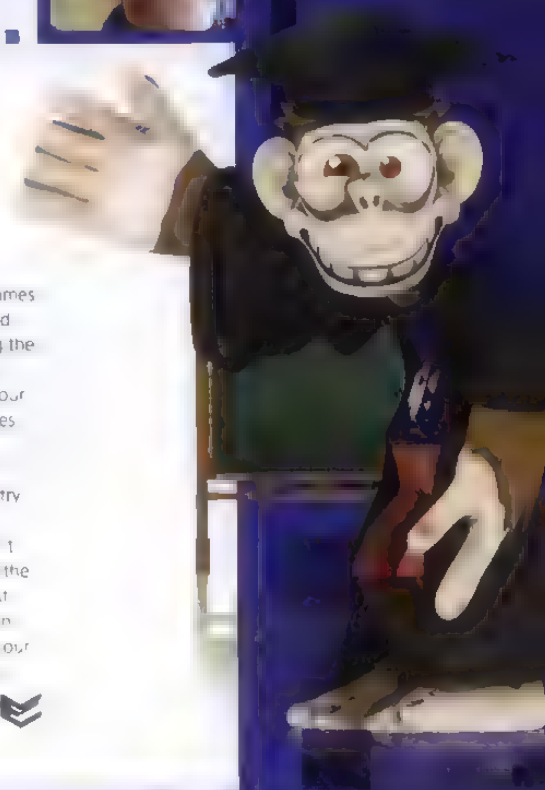
Game Republic, the regional industry forum for games, has over 28 developers in its membership and it supports the relationship between the developers and universities here. At Huddersfield we're very proactive in course development supported by our relationship with industry partners. We believe we can offer what the industry needs.



REGION SPECIFIC



"We're just a small developer to Microsoft but they treat us the same way as any other studio," says De Luca. "We have access to the same advice and support that any other developer would get, and we're expected to meet the same professional standards."





Canalside Studios

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN...

ARE YOU WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR?

We are seeking talented and enthusiastic
A level & BTEC students to join Canalside
Studios at the University of Huddersfield,
who are looking for a career in:

- 3D Art
- Production
- Design
- 2D Art
- Programming
- Animation

Courses include:

Computer Games Design [G4W6 BA/CGD]

Computer Games Programming [G602 BSc/CGP]

**We don't just teach games we make games.
Join the studio experience today!**



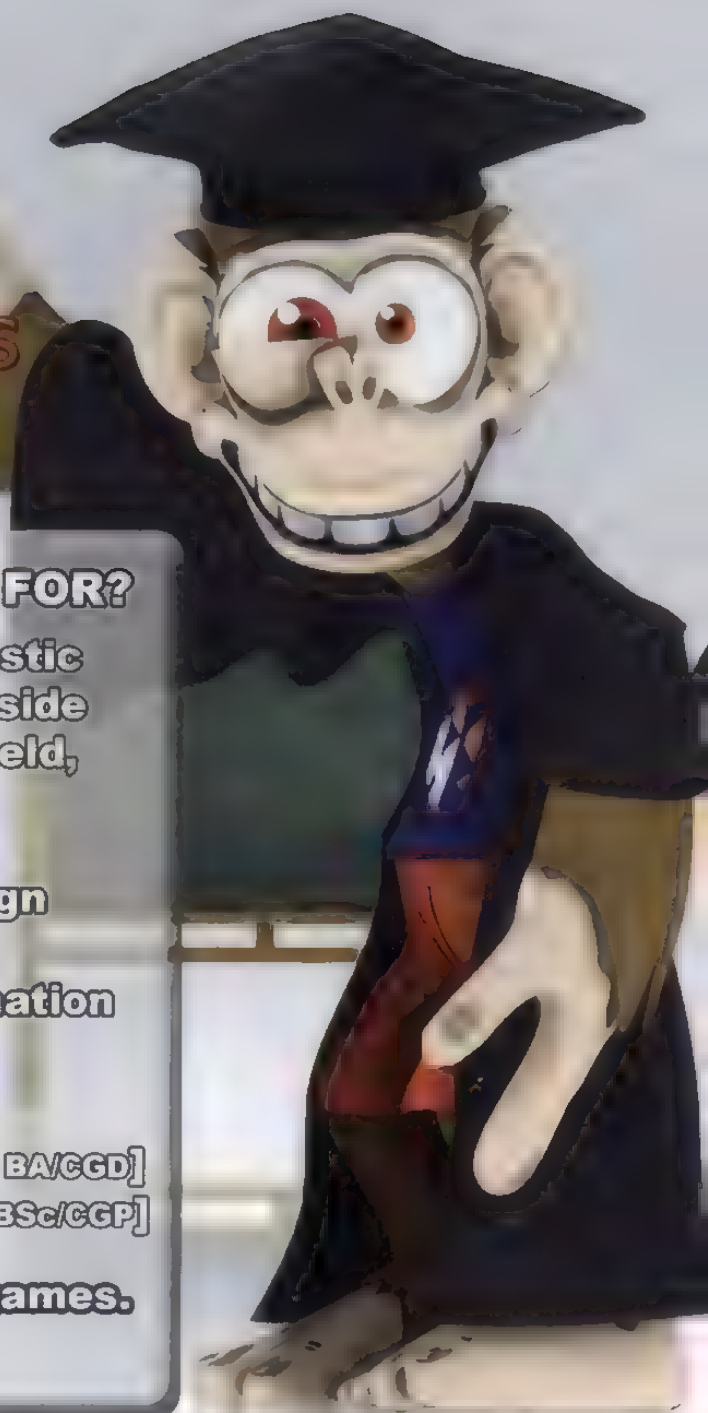
University of
HUDDERSFIELD

<http://digitalmedia.hud.ac.uk/undergraduate>



Canalside Studios

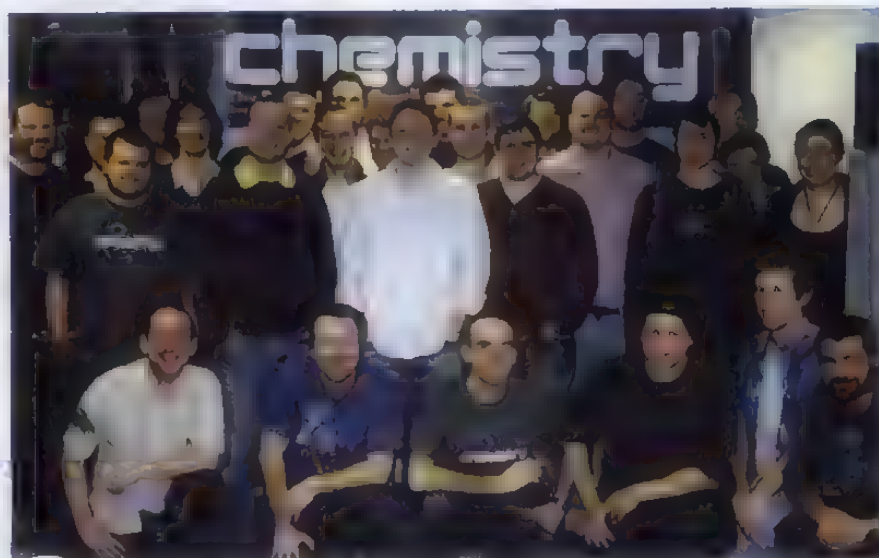
www.canalsidestudios.co.uk



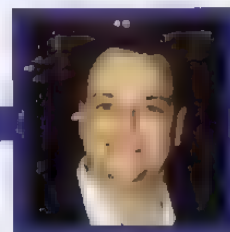
CHEMISTRY (KUJU)

Having undergone a cosmetic overhaul, this studio has set out to change its creative direction, too

NAME: Chemistry
LOCATION: Sheffield
DATE FOUNDED: 2002 (rebranded: 2007)
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: Sheffield: 35; Bruno: 31
URL: www.gamechemistry.com
SELECTED SOFTOGRAPHY: LMA Manager, Club Football series, Sensible Soccer 2006, Buzz! Sports Quiz



Chemistry's biggest successes to date have been *Buzz! Sports Quiz* and *Sensible Soccer 2006*, but it's now positioned to focus on more action-oriented titles using Unreal Engine 3



Interview: Mike Cox

Kuju Sheffield used to be something of a low-key studio producing franchised games such as the *Club Football* and *LMA* series for Codemasters and *Buzz!* ports for Sony. Since it rebranded to Chemistry in 2007, however, its profile has noticeably risen, and it now focuses entirely on games founded on Epic's Unreal 3 Engine. Its first announced title is *To End All Wars*, to be published by Ghostlight, which marks a growing confidence, not to mention commitment to leading-edge technology and new IP. Studio chief **Mike Cox** explains the company's evolution.

Why did you decide to rebrand the studio?

We found that publishers would call up and ask if we could do *SingStar* and titles such as that. They thought because we were Kuju we must do what Zoë Mode in Brighton were doing. The rebranding made sense for a lot of reasons, but mainly so we could show customers that we were specialising. The potential was clearly here at Kuju Sheffield to move into bigger-budget titles, based on the Unreal Engine. FPSes are more my bag, and that really appealed to me.

What has it been like to make the transition to Epic's Unreal Engine?

We wanted to show publishers that we could de-risk with Unreal. While Kuju has its own technology, called Hercules, it's good at some things, but not at others. So this Unreal Engine, it made sense. It's open to modification, we can build quickly effectively. The quality content is very high. We tend to say that

there's a lot of good support, too. With support you have to be specific and the forums and Unreal dev community is very good. We get good responses and there's interesting knowledge being shared. Epic also just put in a crowd system which, though it doesn't conform exactly to what we want, we can adapt our A.I. to it.

What are your goals with *To End All Wars*?

Most FPSes are set in World War II, and what's the most enemies you see onscreen at any one time? Fourteen, 15? We are set in the first World War and the first thing we wanted was to have many more enemies onscreen at any a time. Obviously games like *Call Of Duty* can make it look like hundreds, but it's not the same. To capture the numbers going into battle during World War I we had to totally scrap the AI. We took the source code and kicked it apart. It was OK for 2D, but no more. That will be our USP, and also the way squad behaviour works. We also want *To End All Wars* to be more open-ended – you get objectives but don't have to complete them. The war is happening all around you, but if you don't participate then the tide can turn against you.

You've also opened an office in the Czech Republic – what's the story behind that?

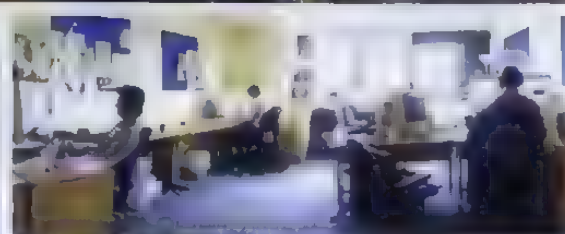
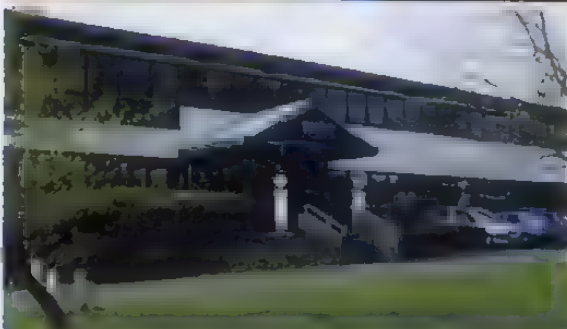
We need capacity and don't want to be a one-project studio. Chemistry is a brand and we will be opening more offices in the future. To scale up to a big budget title in the current climate we needed the Czech office.



TEAM 17

Flexible, hardy and seemingly able to regenerate its properties at will, this is one UK team with legs

NAME Team 17
LOCATION Osset
DATE FOUNDED 1990
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 80
URL www.team17.com
SELECTED SOFTOGRAPHY *Alien Breed, Body Blows, Overdrive, Kingpin, Lemmings, Worms series*



Team 17 recently adopted Unreal Engine 3 in order to ramp up its aspirations on modern console platforms. The company's first title to make use of the tech will be a continuation of the *Leisure Suit Larry* series, but it also has its own new IP in the works



Interview: Martyn Brown

Managing director ■

Starting out as a group of Amiga demo creators in the late '80s, 17Bit Software morphed into Team 17 in 1990. It went on to produce a string of distinctive hits on both Amiga and ST, including *Alien Breed*, *Assassin*, *Body Blows* and *Project-X*. But it was a 1994 release, *Worms*, that really made the company's name: the game eventually making its way to PC, Mac, SNES, Game Boy, Jaguar, Mega Drive and beyond. More recently the developer has worked with Sony on *Lemmings* conversions for both PSP and PSN, and has been breathing new life into the franchise on Xbox Live Arcade. **MD Martyn Brown**, a 17-year veteran of the company, explains how it's stuck around so long, and what's next.

Team 17 is one of the UK's longest surviving indies – what's the formula?

I think it's the people and the work ethic we have up here. We pride ourselves on a great atmosphere made up of close friends working together on projects we all enjoy. We, luckily, operate in a 'no crunch' environment, scheduling all our projects to ensure that our team doesn't spend too many evenings or weekends saving away towards that publication date. Obviously owning the *Worms* IP has meant that we've not been short of a few bob, but we've also done a few other things and have some exciting projects in the pipeline for next year.

You're best known for the *Worms* franchise. How have recent versions of the game performed? And do you still have an appetite for the series?

Worms has been an evergreen franchise for us that has never really stopped going from strength to strength over the years. Our most recent titles *Worms* (XBLA), *Worms: A Space Oddity* and *Worms Open Warfare 3* – have all performed well and have generally been well received by both the media and the public alike. *Worms* XBLA has been the recipient of several awards, as well as being the second highest seller on XBLA in 2007, and also the winner of the 'Most Played Game' people's award from Microsoft.

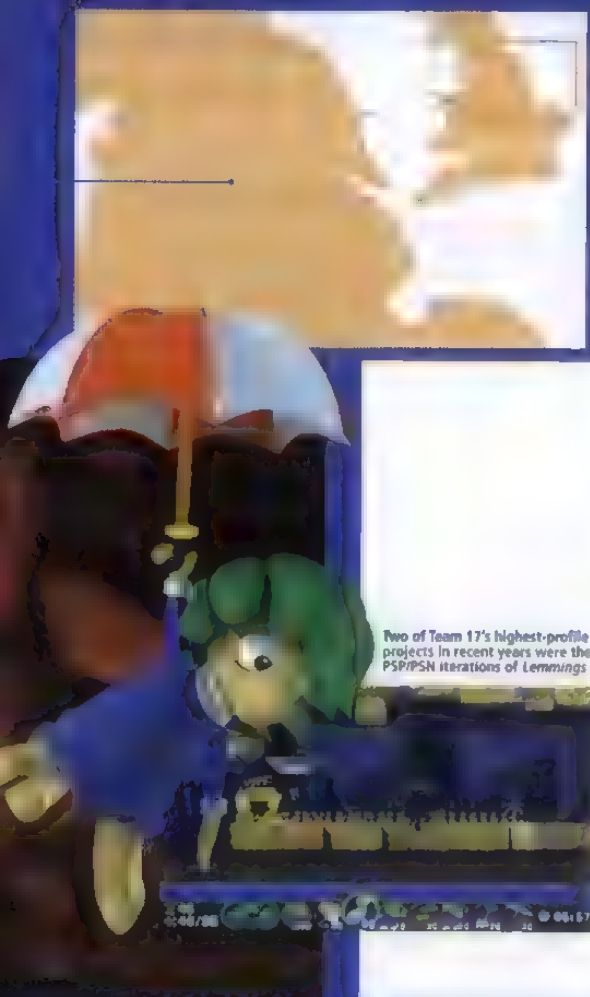
What are the key benefits of having a development studio in Yorkshire?

Right now, Yorkshire is a hub of development studios that is bursting at the seams with teams bringing cracking games to market. We are literally a couple of miles down the road from our friends at Rockstar Leeds and The Code Monkeys, and a short hop down the M1 from our counterparts in Sheffield such as Sumo and Gamesauce.

What about your future projects? And do you have plans for expansion?

The future at Team 17 is bloody busy, to say the least. We are currently finishing up *Leisure Suit Larry*, which is our first true next-gen title using Unreal Engine 3 technology. Alongside that we have two self-financed digital projects in the works for next year, as well as another triple-A title aimed to follow up soon after. Overall, these are exciting times to be part of Team 17, and the best bit is we get to have fun, too!

Two of Team 17's highest-profile projects in recent years were the PSP/PSN iterations of *Lemmings*



THE CODE MONKEYS

The jocular moniker belies a team of dedicated professionals with an enormous back catalogue

NAME:

The Code Monkeys

LOCATION:

Dewsbury

DATE FOUNDED:

1998

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

18

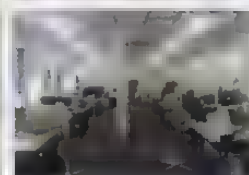
URL:

www.codemonkeys.co.uk

SELECTED

SOFTOGRAPHY:

Gunboat, Turrican, Road Rash, Goofy's Fun House, Worms World Party, Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow (mobile), International Athletics



Like most small teams, The Code Monkeys has experience on mobile platforms working with licensed IP, but its larger projects involve DS, PSP, PS2 and PC, and it has Wii and PS3 productions in the works



Interview:

Adrian Hirst

Development director ■

You've probably never heard of The Code Monkeys, but with over 130 titles under its belt, it's one of the most prolific studios in the UK. The company recently marked its 20th birthday by moving to new office space, and its production rate shows no sign of slowing. Perhaps part of the secret is to keep things lean: you don't, it turns out, need to have a headcount of 100 in order to keep some of the world's biggest publishers coming back for more. Development director **Adrian Hirst** explains how the company has stayed in business even as higher-profile studios in the area have gone to the wall.

The Code Monkeys is one of the region's oldest developers – how did you get started? And how have you survived while others haven't?

The company was founded in 1988, so it's one of the oldest and most respected independent games developers in the world – we have a wealth of experience in videogame development. The design team has direct experience of creating original IPs as well as over two decades of experience developing original content based on licensed IPs. Our client base includes some of the largest international names in the industry such as Fox, Sony, Nintendo, Nokia, Sega, Disney and Konami. We've been able to go from strength to strength by moving with the times and keeping up with the latest technology out there.

How important is it to remain independent?

Have you ever been approached by publishers making offers to buy you out?

Being independent means more choice to consumers. We have pretty much free rein over what we produce when developing our own IPs, and that means our team can be more creative in the kind of games we make. We've never been approached for a buyout, but that's not to say we wouldn't consider it.

What projects are you working on right now?

We recently finished *International Athletics* on DS and PSP, published by Ghostlight. It was one of our own IPs and was put out in time for the Olympics. Other games we're developing right include a WiiWare title which involves a new gameplay concept. This is also our own IP and it has the potential to become a great new franchise, so keep an eye out for it. We're also under NDA for a few more projects.

What are the main benefits of having a development studio situated in Yorkshire?

The cost is the biggest benefit. Situated where we are is particularly great for all our team because we're right next door to the train station.

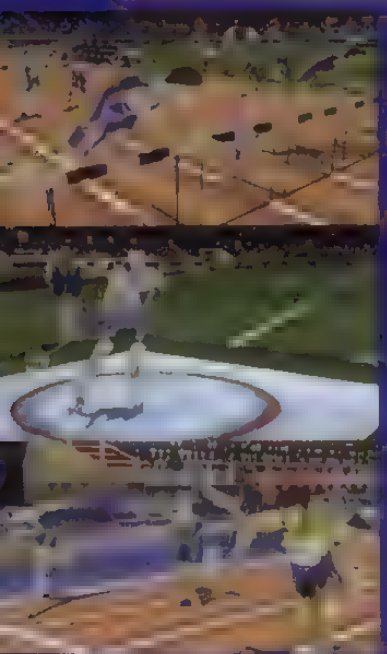
And what about the future? Are you happy staying at the size you are right now?

We've just moved into a larger office and are currently at a team of 18, looking to increase to about 25. We're still a nice manageable size. In the future we'll be working on PS3 and PSN games, and more Wii and DS titles.

The Code Monkeys' latest title, *International Athletics*, was released in time for the Beijing Olympics and proved to be better than the officially licensed game.



The Code Monkeys' take on *Castlevania* is probably its highest-profile mobile game.





chemistry

The Formula For Games™

Recruiting now for all levels

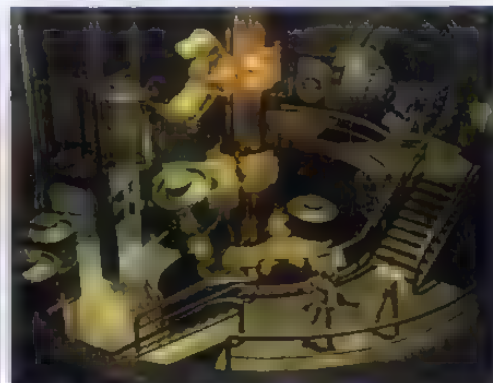
Code Design Art Management



jobs@gamechemistry.com Please provide a CV only. For portfolios/showreels please provide a link for download
An Unreal® Engine 3 studio in the heart of Sheffield. For more information visit www.gamechemistry.com

The UK's most prolific adventure game maker is, says its founder, just a click away from a glorious return

In Cold Blood



Franklin, Cold War-era spyding — November 1941. James Earl Ray (right) is seen with a first sergeant (left) and a first sergeant (left). P&T photo by Cold War-era spyding. Divided 2nd time



Charles Lee,

I think York has to be one of the best places to be beautiful countryside, no pollution and generally no violence. It's a terrific place to live but importantly, we are far enough away from London not to have commuters living here, but in fact London's only one and three quarters of an hour away. We have a terrific train service and also a very good university here. But what particularly likes that York is like a melting pot between southerners, northerners, Georgians, foreign students... It's just full of different people and that gives it a vibrancy.

Games for mobile people



Mobile

Distinctive produces the highest quality games for mobile phone game platforms. To keep ahead of the game, Distinctive continues to invest in its staff and development tools. They continue to expand their range of platforms so that it now covers Symbian, BREW, N-Gage 2 and iPhone.



Facebook

Distinctive believe that playing games against your friends is much more fun than playing against a computer. Having launched their first Facebook game, Anytime Pool, Distinctive have the knowledge and skills to create social games that can be played anytime, anywhere on any device.



iPhone

As the range of alternative input systems proliferate, such as touch-screen and accelerometers, Distinctive is investing to ensure that their games take full advantage of these to create innovative, fun and entertaining game-play mechanics. Their first iPhone games will be released before the end of 2008.

distinctive developments
ahead of the game



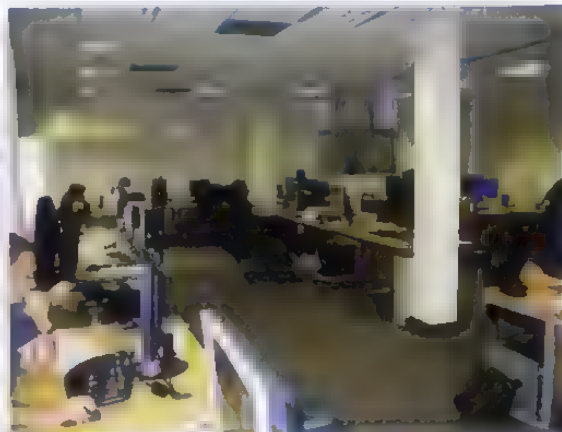
For more info visit www.ddgames.biz or email info@ddgames.biz



NAME: Distinctive Developments
LOCATION: Sheffield
DATE FOUNDED: 1994
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: Sheffield: 30; San Diego: 5; Poland: 10
URL: www.ddgames.biz
SELECTED SOFTOGRAPHY: Metal Gear Acid, UEFA Euro 2008, FIFA 08, Brian Lara 08, Gran Turismo Sport

DISTINCTIVE DEVELOPMENTS

After a change of tack in 2001, this Sheffield-based company is one of the UK's most upwardly mobile



The mobile game dev scene remains a hugely competitive one, but Distinctive is one of its biggest players. Part of the company's success lies in its adaptability, which has seen it produce games as diverse as FIFA 08, Skill Ball Bingo and Metal Gear Acid Mobile



Interview: Nigel Little

Managing director ■

Based in the heart of Sheffield, Distinctive Developments is a dedicated mobile phone operation, but one that prides itself on being a pioneer in the territory. It was back in 2001 that MD Nigel Little decided to take his entire operation off PS1 development and over to new mobile handsets, which were just beginning to flicker into gaming life. The company has never looked back, and is now as comfortable bringing massive franchises such as EA's FIFA series, to 400+ mobile handsets as it is coming up with its own P for Phone products.

There aren't so many independent mobile developers around nowadays – how have you managed to buck the trend?

Quite a lot of the original developers from 2002/2003 were either acquired or have not grown at the same rate as ourselves. As we exited the console development scene we learnt some very difficult lessons that have helped us to give publishers a better service, and we also learnt to invest in our own intellectual property to create long-term value for the company.

Which of your recent projects have you been happiest with?

We have some really exciting projects in development that I can't talk about just yet but of the games that have been released, I'm most proud of Metal Gear Acid and UEFA Euro 2008. On Acid, reworking the PSP game for mobile wasn't without problems, but the end result was a really excellent game. For Euro 2008 we didn't just re-badge a previous game – we rewrote

a lot of the code to create a completely new control system for football games on mobile that hadn't been tried before.

How do you spread work between your Sheffield base and your studios in Poland and San Diego?

With the Polish office we wanted to separate the porting function from the game development function. Game development and porting are completely different – for development you need very creative people, whereas porting is more like manufacturing, so you need staff with different skills. Poland has a highly educated and skilled workforce and being close to the UK meant that it was near enough for us to visit regularly. San Diego was a different matter – we needed a base in the US that allowed us to have the ability to support US phones and San Diego is a mobile development centre because [mobile technology manufacturer] Qualcomm is based there.

And what about the future – what can you tell us about your forthcoming projects?

Our plans centre on continuing to develop some of the best mobile games available. iPhone will be massive for us, and we'll be releasing three of our own titles over the coming months. The first of these will be Bound-A-Round, which features an adventurous squirrel who is on a mission to rescue his extended family by climbing up through a series of exciting locations. It uses the accelerometer to create a game that involves rhythm, and it truly sucks you into the action.

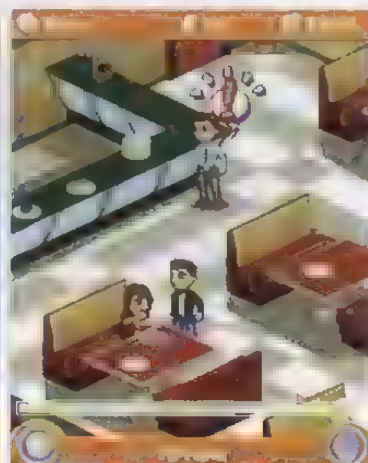




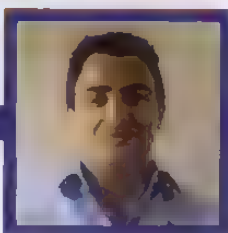
CREATIVE NORTH

Young, ambitious and a Yorkshire success story; why this Huddersfield outfit is ready to take the next step

NAME: Creative North
LOCATION: Huddersfield
DATE FOUNDED: 2005
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 14
URL:
www.creativenorth.co.uk
SELECTED SOFTOGRAPHY:
 Subbuteo, iRB
 Rugby World Cup
 Tropix Mobile



Mobile game *High School Days* (above) mixes the charm of *The Sims* and *Habbo Hotel*



Interview:

Phil Mundy

Managing director ■

While Creative North is a relatively new kid on the block, its dynamic team has already forged links with global corporations such as the BBC, Nokia and Hasbro. While it's largely known for its licenses and mobile iterations of IPs like Subbuteo, it also works closely with brand and advertising agencies to develop interactive campaigns to harness the potential of mobile handsets. More recently it has worked with Kirkstall Council to create *InLiving*, a game designed to help young people overcome the challenges of independent life. MD Phil Mundy tells the studio's story.

What has been the most challenging part of setting up a studio?

Developing a foothold in an established and highly competitive industry. We had to catch up before we could compete, and as an independent developer that required some very long hours and a highly agile approach to doing business and delivering projects.

Can you explain the story behind *InLiving*? And is it an ongoing project?

The product is now fully available to UK councils, housing organisations and schools. It also featured in the 'What Works' section of leading housing sector magazine *Inside Housing*. The response has been fantastic as it was developed in collaboration with a leading housing provider. The plan for the project include adaptation for other important issues and government agendas, including crime and consequence, and green living.

So it has a social agenda, but it's very much a game, with a sense of fun?

It's full of humour, yes, but it does get the message across. It tackles things like how to deal with noisy neighbours and signing up for college courses. In one scenario, if you're persistently late, the chances are you'll get kicked off. It's safe entertainment but it does have a positive message that games can be used for the greater good.

You have a very young team – have most of the employees here come from game development courses at university?

That's right – there's no one in studio on a day-to-day basis over the age of 28. Although there are a few grey hairs on the board! I would say 50 per cent of our developers come from a games degree background, but we also recruit from software engineering and computer science-related fields. We don't have 15-year veterans, but our client sheet is strong.

You're looking at moving into developing DS titles – what are your specific plans?

Although our hands are tied as to how much we can say right now, we're currently working on an original title for DS and iPhone. This new IP is based on a very successful mobile title previously delivered by our studio. Moving to DS involves a change of mindset and we've been exploring the technology for some time now. For the DS project we have four coders, two artists and a producer.



Creative North's mobile sport sim, *iRB Rugby World Cup*

VIDEOGAME CULTURE

EDGE

NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | HANDHELD | COIN-OP | ONLINE



Reaching professionals

453,283

people actively seek employment through
Edge and Edge-Online
every month

Active professionals

50%

are professionals are interested in
changing jobs over
the next 12 months

Experienced professionals

2 years 7 months

experience with in
their chosen field

To advertise in Edge
contact Julian House
jhouse@futurenet.co.uk

"Edge's service was professional, efficient and very effective. During the recruitment campaign we received an excellent response from candidates with the right skills and experience. In no time after the magazine came out, or after putting posts on the site, CVs started flooding in. We will definitely use Edge again for our recruitment needs."

© 2004 Futurenet



BY N'GAI CROAL

PLAYING IN THE DARK

...people refuse to se

What is it that motivates you to play a game? There's the catch-all term, 'fun', which I love and loathe in equal measure. I love it because it binds all of us who indulge in interactive entertainment together: One Nation Under A Game. But I loathe it for much the same reason: the word 'fun' is so overly broad that it often fails to capture the specific experience that I'm looking for, the precise itch I want scratched. Am I looking to kill time? Challenge myself? Compete against someone else? Pretend to be something I'm not? Lose myself in another world? All of the above?

The simple answer, of course, is that it depends. The more complicated answer is that, as of late, I've found it difficult to motivate myself to complete story-based games like *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots*. Increasingly,

at Newsweek don't tell me which games I have to play or how long I should play them for; instead, they pretty much leave me to my own devices. Which, for the second year running, means that I more often than not choose to play games that I can get in and out of quickly, yet are still capable of holding my interest should I decide to go on a binge: *Rez*, *Lumines*, *Every Extend Extra*, *Super Stardust HD*, *Everyday Shooter*, *Geometry Wars Galaxies*, *Rock Band*, *Space Invaders Extreme*, *Bejeweled*

Each of these titles scratches the itch, and they all do it exceedingly well. But it's more than that. Every session that I have with one of these games feels like a complete experience — even when it's interrupted — as though I've experienced a beginning, a middle and an end. With a story-based game, beginnings are easy, middles are often

aversion to narrative is also manifesting itself when faced with other media. I'd rather watch sports than a dramatic television series now that HBO's holy trinity (*The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and *Deadwood*) is off the air. I find I don't watch as many feature films these days, whereas before I thought nothing of going to see three movies or more over the course of a single weekend. Just what's going on here?

In my opinion, the older I get, the less willing I am to waste my time on an entertainment experience that isn't of uniformly high quality, in fact, I'd prefer not to even take the risk of making the commitment. Every televised basketball game isn't uniformly good, but there's certainly enough ritual and custom there, from the announcers' banter to the game's ebb and flow, that it, well... scratches that itch. It's comforting

That's what I get when I pick up *Rez* or *Super Stardust HD* or *Rock Band* for the umpteenth time — or, rather, I know what I'm going to get when I pick these games up for the umpteenth time. That's not to say, however, that I'm no longer receptive to new gaming experiences. It's just that I prefer them to be shorter games: titles like *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved*, *PixelJunk Eden*, *Castle Crashers* and *The Last Guy*, which I can quickly sample, then determine whether they will make it into my rotation or get dropped for all eternity

And that's how I feel at the moment. I may feel differently in a week, a month or a year's time. But for the time being, when I think of fun, it's in the shorter games that I'm discovering the greatest and most reliable pleasure.

N'Gai Croal writes about technology for Newsweek. His blog can be found at blog.newsweek.com/blogs/levelup

The older I get, the less willing I am to waste my time on an entertainment experience that isn't of uniformly high quality

I don't want to remember what I was doing when I last played. I don't want to recall which button does what. I don't want to remember how much I have previously accomplished. I don't want to return to a particular emotional state that corresponds to where I left off in the narrative or mission structure. Once I do all of those things, I'm good to go. But given my increasingly busy life, the time and effort that it takes to properly resume my place in the game-story feels too much like, well, work

Now, I'm not expecting you to sympathise with me here. After all, I'm one of those people who are lucky enough to play games for a living. But I'm fortunate in that my editors

attenuated and misshapen while the endings, assuming I even get there, are frequently awkward, truncated or anticlimactic. This isn't always the case — there are always exceptions — but it's certainly reasonable to say that even many of the best developers struggle with the pacing and structure of narrative-driven titles. Telling a story well over the course of ten or 20 hours isn't an easy task, as even a terrific game like *BioShock* bears out

I know these things to be true about videogames, so I can of course overlook them if I choose. The problem is that when I take a broader look at my current entertainment habits, my recently developed





When it comes to locating hard to find targets, some people use the latest technology, gadgets and gizmos. But when it comes to tracking the best gaming jobs on the market there's only one thing you'll need; access to our talent network. The roles there, you won't see or hear about anywhere else. That's because some of the gaming industry's biggest developers only trust us when they need the right people. So even if you're not looking right now, join our group and see opportunities that others can't.

Simply register now at www.amiquusgamestalentnetwork.com

amiquus[®]
GAMES



TRIGGER HAPPY

I am tired of war. The relentless crump and shudder of explosions, and the whine-skip-puff of bullets that miss me by inches; my aching lower back; the cynical global machinations of the military-industrial complex. Sometimes I have to find a quiet place to sit and rest just to calm my shaken mind. War is hell.

On the other hand, I'm really stoked about increasing my tally so far of 162 headshots, and I've just acquired a new bolt-on gadget for my beloved M4 custom. Plus, for all the 'war economy' talk (a lurid sci-fi version of Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine*), there's nothing more relaxing than going shopping between missions. For guns, I'm as happy and docile a consumer as anyone else. And I can't help but look forward to trying out my new toys on the next unsuspecting mercenary. War is great!

Cut to another story of ageing muscle: John Rambo's body, in Stallone's most recent film, is eerily similar to that of *Old Snake*, decades of violence become inscribed into the parchment skin, a palimpsest of creases, veins and tendons. *Rambo IV* contains perhaps the most viscerally naturalistic depictions yet accomplished in cinema of what happens when human beings are shot with rifles or ripped apart by grenades. It reminds us that a dedication to unsparingly exact representations of violence can have a serious moral purpose. Look, it says: this is what war, that thing that politicians talk about so easily, really involves.

But the same tension is at work here as in

Metal Gear Solid 4: the director is telling us that war is hell, but he is also showing us how exciting it is. In *MGS4*, war is the toy itself, by design. And when Rambo transforms from sulky boat-punter into the implacable killing machine of old, the audience shivers in pleasure even as it winces at the close-ups of bullets ripping flesh.

The problem is as old as Homer, who thrills us with the beauty of his battle scenes even as he laments the waste of life. Perhaps only visual art can avoid it: a single shocking image, like Picasso's *Guernica*, does not titillate. But art with a temporal dimension — literature, movies, videogames — implies continuity. In films and books you need heroes, or at least witnesses who survive to tell the tale. So the depicted war can't be so bad that everyone just dies for no reason. (If all of *Saving Private Ryan* were like the first 20 minutes, with no

one surviving all the way through, it would be unwatchable.) And even if a videogame abjured character continuity, it would still, by its very structure in time, inculcate notions of progression and the satisfaction of victory. It would still have to be, in this sense, fun.

Perhaps Clint Eastwood's diptych, *Flags Of Our Fathers* and *Letters From Iwo Jima*, has come closest among recent war movies in avoiding the satisfactions of combat. But I doubt that a videogame in which you spent most of your time cowering in tunnels and finally committed seppuku by grenade would trouble the charts. And even in Eastwood's films, there is glamour and

beauty: for one thing, the actors are all really really goodlooking (as Derek Zoolander would say).

Do contemporary media 'glamorise' violence? Well, they can't help it. You cannot make an artificial mimesis of violence without aestheticising it. Could we even suppose that taking something revolting like violence and transforming it into something glamorous, something beautiful and amusing, constitutes a kind of triumph? Hideo Kojima's games are, in a sense, all about this question, pummelling it with scattershot Verhoevenesque satire, arch reminders to the player that videogames are essentially a waste of time, and the rather lovely absurdity that you can win a campaign using only anaesthetic bullets.

A more troubling approach, for me, came a couple of years ago in *Shadow Of The Colossus*. My enchantment at the kinetic challenge and haunting beauty of the game was quickly replaced by a sense of waste and guilt at my serial murdering of these dumb giants. I suspected that this was perhaps going to turn out to be the point, but I couldn't bear to carry on. For me, the aesthetic pleasures weren't enough to outweigh the powerful regret the game so astonishingly succeeded in engendering. If a game of violence is so effective in its message of anti-violence that you actually stop playing, does that mean it was a success or a failure?

Compared to that, *MGS4*, with its cramming of the issue of post-traumatic stress disorder into a segmented psyche-bar (arguably a far more damning frivolity than its diarrhoea, porn mags and monkeys), is just a cartoon. Perhaps a wargame can never really be anti-war. In a way that's a relief, I think, as I smoke thoughtfully along with Snake, waiting for the next act.

Steven Poole is the author of *Trigger Happy: The Inner Life Of Videogames*. Visit him online at stevenpoole.net



Austin Game Developers Conference

September 15-17, 2008

Austin Convention Center | Austin, TX



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**"At Their Service: Making a Difference
by Putting Players First"**

Lane Merrifield

Co-founder and General Manager | Club Penguin



**"Computer Entertainment
35 Years From Today"**

Bruce Sterling

American Author



"Is That It? Next Gen Audio"

Jason Page

Audio Manager | Sony Computer Entertainment Europe

 **myGDC**

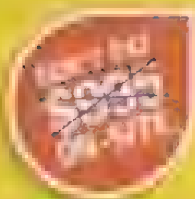
Connect, Engage
and Interact with
**over 5,000 designers,
programmers,
publishers, and
game professionals**
currently in the myGDC

Austin GDC Features Sessions Covering:

Audio Online Games Writing for Games

Business & Marketing Design Social Networking & Community Technology & Services

**REGISTER AT AUSTINGDC.NET BY 01/27
AND SAVE UP TO 20% ON A CONFERENCE PASS**





HI, I'M RANDY

The difficulty of being open-minded

Congratulations, you get the job. Have a seat in the director's chair. Here's the script.

IZZY lands a punch on the jaw of an OUTLAW, who flops unconscious into a water trough. Searching his vest, Izzy finds a Wanted Poster: \$2,000 for PROFESSOR DUNSON, alive or dead.

Got it? See this movie in your head? Good, because the story only works if you tell it well. How are you going to establish the scenes, explain the plot, convey the emotions? Here's the good news: you control every motion of the camera, every element of composition, and every cut and jump in the editing room.

Izzy, revolver drawn, peers down the silent, dusty street. She turns to

confused and wander off. Keep them from facing the wrong way when we trigger a big set-piece. Makes our job a little harder.

Izzy peers into the saloon to size up the drunken, singing outlaws, deciding there are too many. A rickety wagon ambles by, but Izzy lets it pass. Looking to her left, her eyes settle on a crate of TNT.

The studio says choice is BIG these days. I mentioned customising Izzy's outfit, but they want gameplay options. So let's take chunks of the script and add a few branching variations. They all start and end the same, but the player gets to pick different paths. We'll need to make sure the player knows they're making a choice, and ideally give them challenges and rewards to make it meaningful. You're still up to it, right?

Open-city games are selling like hot cakes. We have to build it as one continuous area and let the player go wherever they want

her left and moves cautiously towards the bank. Suddenly she darts for cover – further down the street, several DEPUTIES have appeared and are hauling Professor Dunson, handcuffed, towards the jail. Izzy climbs up to the bank's roof.

Oops, update from the studio. Turns out this needs to be a videogame. Easiest thing would be to stick with what we have but make it interactive. Completely linear, 'string of pearls' design. The player has to follow our script, so the trick is telling them what the script is. Use lighting to draw their eye to objects they need to use. Prod them back on the path if they get

As Izzy sneaks away, a voice comes from the telegraph office
VOICE (O.S.)
He'll talk. And when he does, we'll find out who signed the contract.

Open-city games are selling like hot cakes. We have to build it as one continuous area and let the player go wherever they want. That's going to make everything harder. Before, we could enforce events' order and location. Now, it has to add up no matter how they tackle it. The player has to read the scene and know what to do, no matter which entrance they take. Story beats have to make sense in any order. There can't be degenerate routes past the enemies.

Izzy checks her revolver: only five bullets left, plus one with SHERIFF BAXTOR's name on it. Izzy notices the rickety Jail sign rocking in the breeze, just above the deputies' heads. She takes her lasso from her belt and starts to swing it.

You know how RPGs have different special powers? Different tools and resources? Studio says we gotta support all that too. Gotta add meaningful uses for every special ability. Gotta have solutions when the player runs out of ammo. Gotta support different playstyles: players who like to kill everyone, players who like to outwit everyone. It's all gotta be balanced. Can't suck to play the sneaky guy.

Sheriff Baxtor stands over Izzy, who is laying on the ground dabbing at her bleeding nose. The remaining deputy is holding Professor Dunson.

How is the player supposed to be anybody, go anywhere, pick their own approach, and still find a good game? We used to talk about 'the player climbs to the roof, then the wagon goes by', but now it's 'if players overtax their supply of weapons, we prod them into searching for environmental affordances, making it likely they'll find hints about secondary objectives'.

The bank detonates in a deafening shower of rock and debris. Izzy rolls to her feet and punches out the deputy. She grabs his rifle with one hand and Dunson with the other. IZZY
I didn't realise how explosive that stuff is.

Randy Smith is a lead game designer at EA's LA studio. His current project is a collaboration with Steven Spielberg.



PC GAMER SHOWDOWN

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



**THIS YEAR'S BIGGEST
GAMING PARTY!**

TICKETS FROM JUST £7.50

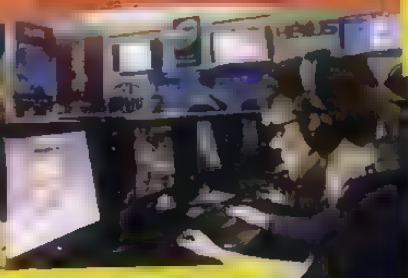
**£35,000 IN CASH
TO BE WON!**



**PLAY UNRELEASED
GAMES INCLUDING
LEFT 4 DEAD!**



**PLAY ON OUR
HIGH-SPEED LAN
ALL WEEKEND!**



**FREE STUFF TO
BE GRABBED!**



PLAY HANDS ON MIRROR'S EDGE, GTA 00, MERCENARIES 2 AND FACEBREAKER

27-28 September 2008

Stoneleigh Park, near Coventry

www.pcgamershowdown.com

Life's Good



LG

**games
radar**



MULTIPLAY

stoneleigh park
EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE CENTRE COVENTRY

Some facilities only available to Participant ticket holders. Featured games subject to change
For full details see www.pcgamershowdown.com

inbox



Issue 192

ONLINE OFFLINE

Choice cuts from
Edge Online's
discussion forum
forum.edge-online.co.uk

Topic: fetch me the
Duck of Truth!

I was playing *Okami* and got to this village where there's a dungeon which is sealed by some sort of magic. Talking to the local princess it turns out I need to find five magic dogs, and then she gives me a 'canine tracking device'. Cue unnecessary fetch quest...

Three words: *Sid Meier's Pirates*. If you visited more than about two ports in one trip your crew started bitching. What kind of pirate signs up for a life of adventure on the high seas and bitches just because he hasn't seen his mommy for a few months?

AK 1979

Most people seem to enjoy fetch quests. These weird specimens are in my experience usually kids not yet mentally numb from doing real work. I say bring back child labour and stop this nonsense.

The remarks quoted in E192's opening editorial suggest that the suits involved either live in another universe, or want to conduct the debate there because the real one isn't big enough to hold their hyperbole.

Firstly, even if Xbox 360 does end up 'outselling' PS3 at some ill-defined point of Don Mattrick's choosing, not knowing how many of those 'sales' are gaming platforms rather than just RROD landfill or spares breakage (and I'll bet you couldn't get that number out of him

play it? For example, a GBA cart can be played on (at least) GBA (SP), GBM, DS (Lite) and the GC GBA adaptor... I'll let you off Virtual Console (because you have to buy the game again in a new format) and PC CD/DVD/BD, because it's impossible to tell how much of the hardware is bought for gaming – just real consoles and real formats. I'd be genuinely interested to see the figures back to, say, PS1 and Game Boy – although, given Crashlander assumes everyone reading E192 has seen a 25-year-old

It gave me some amusement to read Don Mattrick saying that young adult Xbox 360 owners spend roughly 75 hours a week on their machine

with pliers – his interview on page 54 defines evasive bullshit) will forever taint any comparison.

But Hirai-san is no better. To extrapolate that someone 'historically' does *anything* based on one instance is meaningless since you can't draw a line through a single point; and if he hasn't seen a GameCube recently then he's missed the 30 million or so Nintendo have sold in the last 18 months, possibly because he's too far up the pecking order to lift the slot covers on a Wii. Given that most PS3s aren't PS2 compatible, and many PS2s will have died over the years, there may soon be more working GC hardware than PS2.

However, this does lead to a question I'd quite like to see Edge answer with an article and some kind of timeline table: instead of measuring success by hardware or software sales of a particular console or game, how about using the durability of a software format, measured by how many pieces of hardware have been sold that can

Schwarzenegger movie, games still don't have the durability of film.
Dave Lockwood

Hirai's point was surely that Sony hasn't just supported one platform beyond the lifespan of any of its competitors' home formats (unless we've missed lots of recent GameCube releases, that is), but two, which helps to give weight to the company's claim that its vision for PlayStation3 really does extend to ten years.

We'll put our stats man on to your article proposal. Stay tuned.

It gave me some amusement to read Don Mattrick saying that young adult Xbox 360 owners spend roughly 75 hours a week on their machine, like it was something to be proud of. Even in a hardcore gaming magazine like *Edge*, it seemed an unadvisable boast. All I can say to Microsoft is, with sentiments like that, good luck courting the non-gaming crowd. Actually, I suppose that's where



Letter of the month wins a DS Lite

being 'schizophrenic' in your marketing approach (ouch) comes in.
Tom Laverack

Seventy-five hours certainly would seem to suggest that there's an awful lot of washing-up being left unattended in an awful lot of sinks, not to mention the piles of neglected homework (but let's not get too far into that for fear of reactionary tabloids picking it up and launching a campaign to stop these evil videogaming devices destroying the future prospects of our youth). But how far off the mark is it, really? Drop us a line with details of your own habits and we'll compile some form of convoluted, scientific-looking graph.

Your somewhat cursory response to Ben Wood's letter [E191] regarding misogyny in *GTAIV*, droll though it was, is symptomatic of a general blindness the videogaming community has as a whole to the still male-orientated skew of the industry, and not just any male, but a particular kind of Nuts/Loaded-reading barely out of puberty one at that. The constant cry for the industry to be taken as seriously as, say, the movie industry seems to conveniently forget the reality of where the videogames industry is still at in terms of its

representations of groups in society and storylines that don't retread the same tired formulas in settings that are barely noticeably different from each other.

If Martians arrived and took videogames as the only example of where western society was up to at the beginning of the century, they'd think the only subjects that aroused any passion in mankind were the military, crime and a morbid fascination in any kind of violence. What other current format would still consider it acceptable for women to be referred to as 'whores' and 'bitches' as a form of entertainment? What other format would be complicit with the use of such terms by making no attempt to even acknowledge the issue, let alone discuss it? And yeah, of course the terms are used in movies and literature now, but they're within a context, both of the movie or book itself and also of a wider selection of both that embrace all

of light in the midst of all this, and for that we have to be thankful that they've saved the industry from being dominated entirely by hues of greens and browns and all the *Soldier Of Fortune* connotations the colours and their subject matter imply, but with half the industry still obsessed by portraying life through a particularly narrow Sun reader's prism, which sniggers in a kind of Chris Moyles way at any hint of growing up, then it's destined to remain culturally on the sidelines — and deservedly so.

Mark Whitfield

GTAIV is blatantly satirical in its take on society, and society happens to be sullied by racism, sexism, and all sorts of other miserable -isms. If other media don't have to do so, why should games pretend that these things don't exist by mapping out their ambitions in Happyland? And let's not pretend that mainstream examples of any other form

With half the industry still obsessed by portraying life through a particularly narrow Sun reader's prism, it's destined to remain culturally on the sidelines

aspects of life. Whereas the movie industry has vibrant art-house, indie and world subgenres flourishing to reflect the different interests and backgrounds of its viewers, where are the same flourishing formats in videogames? Nintendo is a beacon

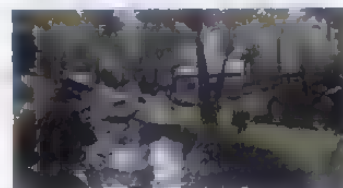
of entertainment aren't full of guns and action hero tripe. As for a lack of a vibrant indie gaming scene that wrestles with the kind of cultural topics you're pining for, have you really been neglecting your PC so much? Anyway, on to another take on GTAIV

Topic Do you want to work within the games industry? I have never, ever, wanted to work in this industry. It would ruin a great little hobby and projects being canned has always put me right off. I'm more than happy for others to sweat blood to make disposable entertainment for me, thanks

My first uni attempt was at computing as I thought being into gaming meant I'd be good at it. Wrong! I had to make databases in COBOL, which is about as interesting as pulling hair out of plugholes. I did make an interesting menu system which cleverly gave error messages to hide the fact that there was no code behind any of the options. I thought it was innovative. The lecturers didn't.

When I was in smaller companies I hated working on prototypes I knew would never get signed. Half wages when we had no contracts, redundancies if we had no contract for a few months. When I was at the bigger companies I hated all the hollow promises: "This is the last game we will ever do overtime on — after this we can name our price!" I quit almost three years ago and I'm only just starting to enjoy games again for what they are.

I think one of the problems is that pissed-off people shout loudest and everyone loves a bit of Schadenfreude rubberneckin'. Yeah, crunch, canned games, projects gone sour, development shifting overseas, low wages (compared to comparatively skilled jobs in other sectors) and the like all get lots of press because when you feel you've been wronged you tend to make a bit of a fuss about it on the old internet. I think the happily content workers will just get on with it and maybe chime in every so often to say that, yes, they quite like their job, thank you very much.



Metal Gear Solid 4's inclusion of a black character is a positive move for gaming, says Danny B, who also suggests that Konami's game offers a refreshingly cynical perspective

Ben Wood's comments about GTAIV are petty. He ignores the fact that every recent gaming blockbuster has managed to be a far more liberal product than their Hollywood counterparts.

The latest *Grand Theft Auto* does feature sexist cab drivers happy to brag about wife-beating, but it also does something that not many games manage to do: in effect, make a bit-part character from a game appear almost human in the sense that we despise him almost immediately. It also allows us to kill or rob this despicable cretin — something not many games allow. Sam Houser and crew know that people like this exist in the world; finally, in a *GTA* game, a kill can actually mean something more than taking a jeep at high speed along a sidewalk.

MGS4 features a witty and sardonic black character (he's an arms dealer, but it's a start), the option to help Arab natives fight greedy, white, soldiers, and the notion that women are not useless during warfare, yet are the group most often victimised by it. This is more cynical stuff than what can be found in the latest American flick.

Iron Man says that you have to be a dude to fight in a robot suit (thank god for Samus Aran). Ellen Page still hasn't been hired as Robin in *Batman*, and *The Incredible Hulk* has Liv Tyler. The gaming landscape is a lot less sexist than it looks, and its future is definitely more positive than that of film.

Danny B

The rise of female protagonists in games is hampered a little by the fact that Samus Aran doesn't even speak. And when's the next Lara Croft going to arrive? Ultimately, though, like you, we're quietly optimistic.



Mark Whitfield says that GTAIV's inclusion of characters who talk about women in a demeaning manner is ultimately holding back gaming's evolution, and that we should be applauding Nintendo

I am a gamer with a disability that leaves me with only limited use of my hands. What this means is that to play games using a joypad I'm forced to place the pad on a flat surface, such as a table. Which means that I have great difficulty reaching the triggers and bumper buttons on a joypad. Which leads me to my main point: games that don't offer fully configurable controls, or only offer preset configurable controls, often have vital functions mapped to said buttons. This can make it very hard and even impossible for me to play many games fully.

I would like to respectfully ask the development community to think of me and others like me when designing control schemes in their games.

I firmly believe that all games should have fully configurable control schemes so that people with differing abilities can enjoy gaming to the full, and can see no technical

Topic I'm waiting here

I am sick of developer logos and intros before I get to the title screen. It's absurd. *Bad Company* insists I see that poxy grenade logo every time. I sound trivial but it does get to me. It feels intrusive when I've seen it over ten times. Like TV adverts. That's why I love the plastic cartridge days of old: no messing around.

scott humpal28

I hold a different view. If the company has spent much time and effort delivering this piece of gaming to me, why not let them have a few seconds of my time, to let me know who they are. They deserve it.

algaivista3

Doesn't normally bother me, but I noticed on *Soul Calibur 4* there's about five logos before the game starts, which has started to irritate me slightly.

murt nash ne

reason why this should not be the case.

George Wyatt

Console game controls are more adaptable now than ever, something that hits home when you dig out a game like *The Wind Waker* and find yourself combing through its menus for the option to switch off its inverted Y axis before coming to the unhappy realisation that such an option doesn't actually exist. (Did it really just not bother us back in 2003? Or did we class the ability to easily switch from QWERT to QAOPM as being just a computer thing?) But, as you say, there's no reason why they can't be even more reconfigurable. If game developers would like to suggest otherwise, of course, get in touch

It may have come to the attention of some gamers that the Conservative party leader David Cameron recently compared his party's

progress to completing level one of *Tomb Raider*. I can see where he's coming from juxtaposing the Conservatives with *Tomb Raider*: a stalwart of yesteryear with a fresh-faced lead protagonist, who has what can only be described as a wonky polygon for a head, repeatedly jumping from right to left whilst taking cheap shots at a lumbering outmoded dinosaur.

Stick that in your extended metaphor and smoke it!

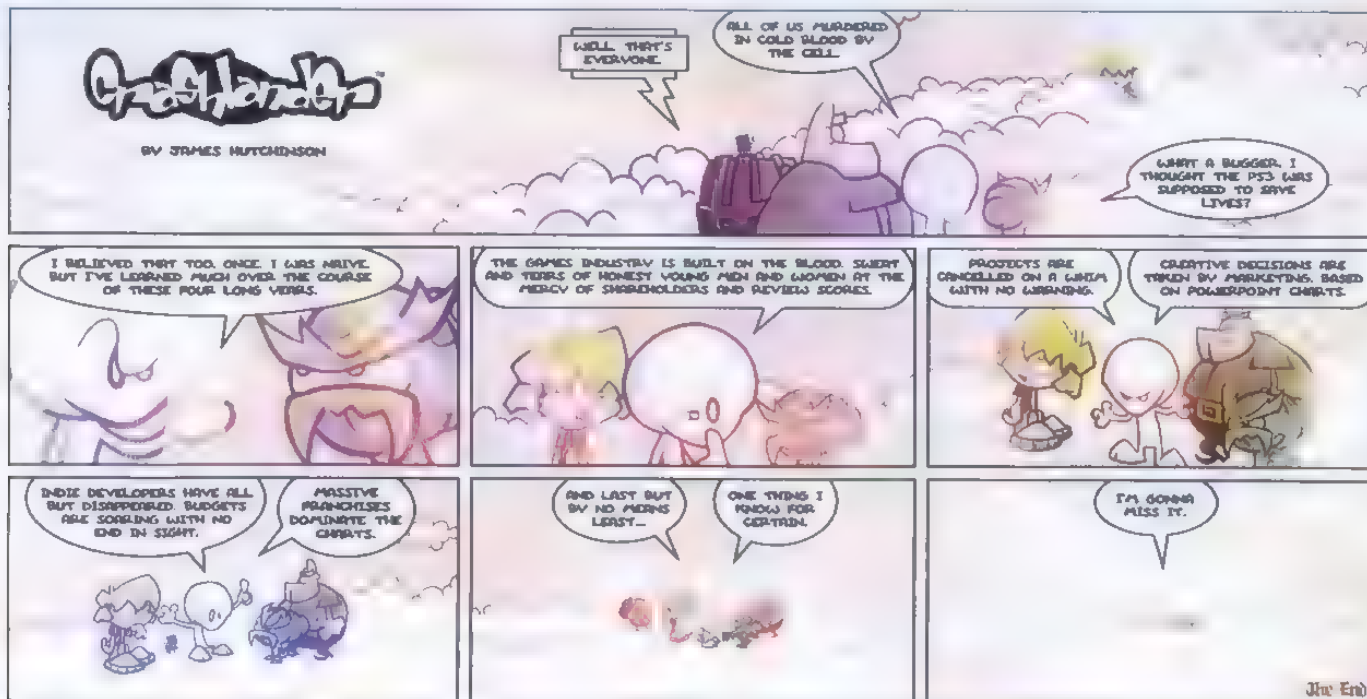
Jamie Upton

And we thought we'd make it through without politics getting a mention. A DS Lite is on its way.

Send us email (edge@futurenet.co.uk), but be sure to use 'Inbox' as the subject line. Or send a letter to this address. Inbox, Edge, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW

Crashlander

BY JAMES HUTCHINSON



Vote Now

Shortlist Now Open

VOTE NOW
• WIN •
£10,000
WORTH OF PRIZES
VISIT
GOLDENJOYSTICK.COM



Choose your winners at
www.goldenjoystick.com

The **Golden Joystick Awards** shortlist is now open and it's down to you to make sure your favourite walks away with the ultimate gaming accolade, a Golden Joystick Award. Plus vote now and you'll be in with a chance to win £10,000 worth of fantastic prizes, simply cast your vote at **www.goldenjoystick.com**



Next month

Edge 194
on sale September 25





EDGE
edge-online.com

Future
with the best

OCTOBER 2008
£4.50
1.00

